

THE WORKS

OF

THE REV. RICHARD WATSON.

VOLUME IX.

CONTAINING

THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.

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THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES:

OR,

A VIEW

OF

THE EVIDENCES, DOCTRINES, MORALS, AND
INSTITUTIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

THEOLOGIÆ autem objectum est ipse Deus. Habent aliæ omnes scientiæ sua objecta, nobilia certe, et digna in quibus humana mens considerandis tempus, otium, et diligentiam adhibeat. Hæc una circa Ens entium et Causam causarum, circa Principium naturæ, et gratiæ in natura existentis, naturæ adsistentis, et naturam circumstantis, versatur. Dignissimum itaque hoc est Objectum et plenum venerandæ Majestatis, præcellensque reliquis.

ARMINIUS.

TO
THE REV. JABEZ BUNTING, A.M.,
THE FOLLOWING WORK
Is Inscribed,
AS
AN EXPRESSION OF RESPECT FOR HIS
TALENTS AND VIRTUES,
AND OF
THE VALUE PLACED UPON HIS FRIENDSHIP,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE object of this work is to exhibit the Evidences, Doctrines, Morals, and Institutions of Christianity, in a form adapted to the use of young Ministers and Students in Divinity. It is hoped, also, that it may supply the *desideratum* of a body of Divinity, adapted to the present state of theological literature; neither Calvinistic on the one hand, nor Pelagian on the other.

The reader will perceive that the object has been to follow a course of plain and close argument, on the various subjects discussed, without any attempt at embellishment of style, and without adding practical uses and reflections, which, however important, did not fall within the plan of this publication. The various controversies on fundamental and important points have been introduced; but it has been the sincere aim of the author to discuss every subject with fairness and candour; and honestly, but in the spirit of “the truth,”—which he more anxiously wishes to be taught than to teach,—to exhibit what he believes to be the sense of the holy Scriptures, to whose authority, he trusts, he has unreservedly subjected all his own opinions.

London, March 26th, 1823.

THEOLOGICAL INSTITUTES.

PART FIRST.

EVIDENCES OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER I.

Man a Moral Agent.

THE theological system of the holy Scriptures being the subject of our inquiries, it is essential to our undertaking to establish their divine authority. But before the direct evidence which the case admits is adduced, our attention may be profitably engaged by several considerations, which afford presumptive evidence in favour of the revelations of the Old and New Testaments. These are of so much weight that they ought not, in fairness, to be overlooked ; nor can their force be easily resisted by the impartial inquirer.

The moral agency of man is a principle on which much depends in such an investigation ; and, from its bearing upon the question at issue, requires our first notice.

He is a moral agent who is capable of performing moral actions ; and an action is rendered moral by two circumstances,—that it is voluntary, and that it has respect to some rule which determines it to be good or evil. “Moral good and evil,” says Locke, “is the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law, whereby good or evil is drawn upon us from the will or power of the law-maker.”

The terms found in all languages, and the laws which have been enacted in all states, with accompanying penalties, as well

as the praise or dispraise which men, in all ages, have expressed respecting the conduct of each other, sufficiently show that man has always been considered as an agent actually performing, or capable of performing, moral actions ; for as such he has been treated. No one ever thought of making laws to regulate the conduct of the inferior animals, or of holding them up to public censure or approbation.

The rules by which the moral quality of actions has been determined are, however, not those only which have been embodied in the legislation of civil communities. Many actions would be judged good or evil were all civil codes abolished ; and others are daily condemned or approved in the judgment of mankind which are not of a kind to be recognised by public laws. Of the moral nature of human actions there must have been a perception in the minds of men previous to the enactment of laws : Upon this common perception all law is founded, and claims the consent and support of society ; for in all human legislative codes there is an express or tacit appeal to principles previously acknowledged, as reasons for their enactment.

This distinction in the moral quality of actions previous to the establishment of civil regulations, and independent of them, may, in part, be traced to its having been observed, that certain actions are injurious to society, and that to abstain from them is essential to its well-being. Murder and theft may be given as instances. It has also been perceived that such actions result from certain affections of the mind ; and the indulgence or restraint of such affections has, therefore, been also regarded as a moral act. Anger, revenge, and cupidity, have been deemed evils, as the sources of injuries of various kinds ; and humanity, self-government, and integrity, have been ranked among the virtues ; and thus, both certain actions, and the principles from which they spring, have, from their effect upon society, been determined to be good or evil.

But it has likewise been observed, by every man, that individual happiness, as truly as social order and interests, is materially affected by particular acts, and by those feelings of the heart which give rise to them ; as, for instance, by anger,

malice, envy, impatience, cupidity, &c. ; and that whatever civilized men, in all places, and in all ages, have agreed to call vice, is inimical to health of body, or to peace of mind, or to both. This, it is true, has had little influence upon human conduct ; but it has been acknowledged by the poets, sages, and satirists of all countries, and is adverted to as matter of universal experience. Whilst, therefore, there is, in the moral condition and habits of man, something which propels him to vice, uncorrected by the miseries which it never fails to inflict, there is also something in the constitution of the human soul which renders vice subversive of its happiness, and something in the established law and nature of things which renders vice incompatible with the collective interests of men in the social state.

Let that, then, be granted by the Theist which he cannot consistently deny,—the existence of a supreme Creator, of infinite power, wisdom, goodness, and justice, who has both made men and continues to govern them ; and the strongest presumption is afforded,—by the very constitution of the nature of man, and the relations established among human affairs, which, with so much constancy, dissociate happiness from vicious passions, health from intemperance, the peace, security, and improvement of society from violence and injustice,—that the course of action which best secures human happiness has the sanction of his will ; or, in other words, that He, by these circumstances, has given his authority in favour of the practice of virtue, and opposed it to the practice of vice.*

But though that perception of the difference of moral actions which is antecedent to human laws, must have been strongly confirmed by these facts of experience, and by such observa-

* “As the manifold appearances of design and of final causes, in the constitution of the world, prove it to be the work of an intelligent mind ; so the particular final causes of pleasure and pain, distributed among his creatures, prove that they are under his government,—what may be called his natural government of creatures endued with sense and reason. This, however, implies somewhat more than seems usually attended to when we speak of God’s natural government of the world : It implies government of the very same kind with that which a master exercises over his servants, or a civil Magistrate over his subjects.”—BISHOP BUTLER.

tions; we have no reason to conclude that those rules by which the moral quality of actions has, in all ages, been determined, were formed solely from a course of observation on their tendency to promote or obstruct human happiness ; because we cannot collect, either from history or tradition, that the world was ever without such rules, though they were often warped and corrupted. The evidence of both, on the contrary, shows, that so far from these rules having originated from observing what was injurious and what beneficial to mankind, there has been, almost among all nations, a constant reference to a declared will of the supreme God, or of supposed deities, as the rule which determines the good or the evil of the conduct of men ; which will was considered by them as a law, prescribing the one and restraining the other under the sanction, not only of our being left to the natural injurious consequences of vicious habit and practice in the present life, or of continuing to enjoy the benefits of obedience in personal and social happiness here ; but also of positive reward and positive punishment in a future life.

- Whoever speculated on the subject of morals and moral obligation, in any age, was previously furnished with these general notions and distinctions ; they were in the world before him ; and if all tradition be not a fable, if the testimony of all antiquity, whether found in poets or historians, be not delusive, they were in the world in those early periods when the great body of the human race remained near the original seat of the parent families of all the modern and now widely-extended nations of the earth ; and, in those early periods, they were not regarded as distinctions of mere human opinion and consent, but were invested with a divine authority.

We have, then, before us two presumptions, each of great weight. First, that those actions which, among men, have almost universally been judged good, have the implied sanction of the will of our wise and good Creator, being found in experience, and by the constitution of our nature and of human society, most conducive to human happiness. And, second, that they were originally, in some mode or other, prescribed and enjoined as his law, and their contraries prohibited.

If, therefore, there is presumptive evidence, of only ordinary strength, that the rule by which our actions are determined to be good or evil is primarily a law of the Creator, we are all deeply interested in ascertaining where that law exists in its clearest manifestation. For ignorance of the law, in whole or in part, will be no excuse for disobedience, if we have the opportunity of acquainting ourselves with it; and an accurate acquaintance with the rule may assist our practice in cases of which human laws take no cognizance, and which the wilfully corrupted general judgment of mankind may have darkened. And should it appear either that in many things we have offended more deeply than we suspect, whether wilfully or from an evitable ignorance; or that, from some common accident which has befallen our nature, we have lost the power of entire obedience without the use of new and extraordinary means, the knowledge of the rule is of the utmost consequence to us, because by it we may be enabled to ascertain the precise relation in which we stand to God our Maker; the dangers we have incurred; and the means of escape, if any have been placed within our reach.

CHAPTER II.

The Rule which determines the Quality of moral Actions must be presumed to be matter of Revelation from God.

It is well observed by a judicious writer, that “all the distinctions of good and evil refer to some principle above ourselves; for, were there no supreme Governor and Judge to reward and punish, the very notions of good and evil would vanish away; they could not exist in the minds of men, if there were not a supreme Director to give laws for the measure thereof.” *

If we deny the existence of a divine law obligatory upon man, we must deny that the world is under divine government; for government without rule or law is a solecism; and to deny the divine government, would leave it impossible for us to account for that peculiar nature which has been given to man, and those relations among human concerns and interests to which we have adverted, and which are so powerfully affected by our conduct;—certain actions and habits which almost all mankind have agreed to call good, being connected with the happiness of the individual, and the well-being of society; and so on the contrary. This, too, has been matter of uniform and constant experience from the earliest ages, and warrants, therefore, the conclusion, that the effect arises from original principles and a constitution of things which the Creator has established. Nor can any reason be offered why such a nature should be given to man, and such a law impressed on the circumstances and beings with which he is surrounded, except that both had an intended relation to certain courses of action as the sources of order and happiness, as truly as there was an intended relation between the light, and the eye which is formed to receive its rays.

* Ellis's Knowledge of Divine Things, &c.

But as man is not carried to this course of action by physical impulse or necessity ; as moral conduct supposes choice, and therefore instruction, and the persuasion of motives arising out of it ; the benevolent intention of the Creator as to our happiness could not be accomplished without instruction, warning, reward, and punishment ; all of which necessarily imply superintendence and control, or, in other words, a moral government. The creation, therefore, of a being of such a nature as man, implies divine government, and that government a divine law.

Such a law must be the subject of revelation. Law is the will of a superior power ; but the will of a superior visible power cannot be known without some indication by words or signs, in other terms, without a revelation ; and much less the will of an invisible power, of an order superior to our own, and confessedly mysterious in his mode of existence, and the attributes of his nature.

Again : The will of a superior is not in justice binding until, in some mode, it is sufficiently declared ; and the presumption therefore, that God wills the practice of any particular course of action, on the part of his creatures, establishes the farther presumption, that of that will there has been a manifestation ; and the more so if there is reason to suppose, that any penalty of a serious nature has been attached to disobedience.

The revelation of this will or law of God may be made either by action, from which it is to be inferred ; or by direct communication in language. Any indication of the moral perfections of God, or of his design in forming moral beings, which the visible creation presents to the mind ; or any instance of his favour or displeasure towards his creatures clearly and frequently connected in his administration with any particular course of conduct ; may be considered as a revelation of his will by action ; and is not at all inconsistent with a further revelation by the direct means of language.

The Theist admits that a revelation of the will of God has been made by significant actions, from which the duty of creatures is to be inferred ; and he contends that this is sufficient. “ They who never heard of any external revela-

tion, yet if they knew, from the nature of things, what is fit for them to do, they know all that God will or can require of them." * •

They who believe that the holy Scriptures contain a revelation of God's will do not deny that indications of his will have been made by action ; but they contend that they are in themselves imperfect and insufficient, and that they were not designed to supersede a direct revelation. They hold, also, that a direct communication of the divine will was made to the progenitors of the human race, which received additions at subsequent periods, and that the whole was at length embodied in the book called, by way of eminence, "The Bible."

The question immediately before us is, on which side there is the strongest presumption of truth. Are there, in the natural works of God, or in his manner of governing the world, such indications of the will of God concerning us, as can afford sufficient direction in forming a perfectly virtuous character, and sufficient information as to the means by which it is to be effected ? We may try this question by a few obvious instances.

The Theist will himself acknowledge, that temperance, justice, and benevolence, are essential to moral virtue. With respect to the first, nothing appears in the constitution of nature, or in the proceedings of the divine administration, to indicate it to be the will of God that the appetites of the body should be restrained within the rules of sobriety, except that, by a connexion which has been established by him, the excessive indulgence of those appetites usually impairs health. If, therefore, we suppose this to amount to a tacit prohibition of excess, it still leaves those free from the rule whose firm constitutions do not suffer from intemperate gratifications ; it gives one rule for the man of vigorous, and another for the man

* Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 233.

"By employing our reason to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature, physical and moral, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of those laws which are deducible from them, but a general knowledge of the manner in which God is pleased to exercise his supreme powers in this system."
—*BOLINGBROKE'S Works*, vol. v., p. 100.

of feeble, health ; and it is no guard against that occasional insobriety which may be indulged in without obvious danger to health, but which nevertheless may be excessive in degree, though occasional in occurrence. The rule is therefore imperfect.

Nor are the obligations of justice in this way indicated with adequate clearness. Acts of injustice are not, like acts of excessive intemperance, punishable in the ordinary course of Providence by pain and disease and premature death, as their natural general consequences ; nor, in most instances, by any other marked infliction of the divine displeasure in the present life. From their injurious effects upon society at large, indications of the will of God respecting them may doubtless be inferred, but such effects arise out of the grosser acts of fraud and rapine ; those only affect the movements of society, (which goes on without being visibly disturbed by the violations of the nicer distinctions of equity that form an essential part of virtue,) and never fail to degrade and corrupt individual character. Rules of justice, therefore, thus indicated, would, like those of temperance, be very imperfect.

The third branch of virtue is benevolence, the disposition and the habit of doing good to others. But in what manner, except by revelation, are the extent and obligation of this virtue to be explained ? If it be said, that “the goodness of God himself, as manifested in creation and providence, presents so striking an example of beneficence to his creatures, that his will, as to the cultivation of this virtue, may be unequivocally inferred from it,” we cannot but perceive, that this example itself is imperfect, unless other parts of the divine conduct be explained to us, as the Scriptures explain them. For if we have manifestations of his goodness, we see also fearful proofs of his severity. Such are the permission of pestilence, earthquakes, inundations ; and the infliction of pain and death upon all men, even upon infants and unsinning animals. If the will of God in favour of beneficent actions is to be inferred from the pleasure which is afforded to those who perform them, it is only indicated to those to whom a beneficent act gives pleasure, and its non-performance pain ; and it cannot there-

fore be at all apprehended by those who by constitution are obdurate, or by habit selfish. The rule would therefore be uncertain and dark, and entirely silent as to the extent to which beneficence is to be carried, and whether there may not be exceptions to its exercise as to individuals, such as enemies, vicious persons, and strangers.

Whatever general indications there may be in the acts of God, in the constitution of human nature, or in the relations of society, that some actions are according to the will of God, and therefore good, and that others are opposed to his will, and therefore evil; it follows, that they form a rule too vague in itself, and too liable to different interpretations, to place the conduct of men under adequate regulation, even in respect of temperance, justice, and beneficence. But if these and other virtues, in their nicest shades, were indicated by the types of nature, and the manifestations of the will of God in his moral government, these types and this moral government are either entirely silent, or speak equivocally, as to subjects of vital importance to the right conduct and effectual moral control, as well as to the hopes and the happiness, of man.

There is no indication, for instance, in either nature or providence, that it is the will of God that his creatures should worship him; and the moral effects of adoration, homage, and praise, on this system, would be lost. There is no indication that God will be approached in prayer, and this hope and solace of man is unprovided for. Nor is there a sufficient indication of a future state of rewards and punishment; because there is no indubitable declaration of man's immortality, nor any facts and principles so obvious as to enable us confidently to infer it. All observation lies directly against the doctrine of the immortality of man. He dies, and the probabilities of a future life which have been established upon the unequal distribution of rewards and punishments in this life, and the capacities of the human soul, are a presumptive evidence which has been adduced, as we shall afterwards show, only by those to whom the doctrine had been transmitted by tradition, and who were, therefore, in possession of the idea; and, even then, to have any effectual force of persuasion, they must be built

upon antecedent principles furnished only by the revelations contained in holy Scripture. Hence some of the wisest Heathens, who were not wholly unaided in their speculations on these subjects by the reflected light of those revelations, confessed themselves unable to come to any satisfactory conclusion. The doubts of Socrates, who expressed himself the most hopefully of any on the subject of a future life, are well known ; and Cicero, who occasionally expatiates with so much eloquence on this topic, shows, by the sceptical expressions which he throws in, that his belief was by no means confirmed.* If, therefore, without any help from direct or traditional instruction, we could go as far as they, it is plain that our religious system would be deficient in all those motives to virtue which arise from the doctrines of man's accountability and a future life, and in that moral control which such doctrines exert ; the necessity of which for the moral government of the world is sufficiently proved, by the wickedness that prevails even where these doctrines are fully taught.

Still farther, there is nothing in those manifestations of God and of his will, which the most attentive contemplatist can be supposed to collect from his natural works and from his sovereign rule, to afford the hope of pardon to any one who is conscious of having offended him, or any assurance of felicity in a future state, should one exist.

Some consciousness of offence is felt by every man ; and though he should not know the precise nature or extent of the penalty attached to transgression, he has no reason to conclude that he is under a mild and fondly merciful government, and that therefore his offences will, in course, be forgiven. All observation and experience lie against this ; and the case is the more alarming to a considerate mind, that so little of the sad inference, that the human race is under a rigorous administration, depends upon reasoning and opinion : It is fact

* So, in his *Tusc. Quest.* 1, he says, *Expone igitur, nisi molestum est, primum animos, si potes, remanere post mortem ; tum si minus id obtinebis, (est enim arduum,) docebis carere omni malo mortem.* "Show me first, if you can, and if it be not too troublesome, that souls remain after death ; or, if you cannot prove that, (for it is difficult,) declare how there is no evil in death."

of common and daily observation. The minds of men are in general a prey to discontent and care, and are agitated by various evil passions. The race itself is doomed to wasting labours of the body or the mind, in order to obtain subsistence. Their employments are for the most part low and grovelling, in comparison of the capacity of the soul for intellectual pleasure and attainments. The mental powers, though distributed with great equality among the various classes of men, are only in the case of a few individuals ever awakened. The pleasures most strenuously sought are therefore sensual, degrading, and transient. Life itself, too, is precarious: Infants suffer and die, youth is blighted, and thus by far the greater part of mankind is swept away before the prime of life is attained. Casualties, plagues, famines, floods, and war carry on the work of destruction. In the majority of states the poor are oppressed, the rich are insecure, private wrong is added to public oppression, widows are wronged, orphans are deprived of bread, and the sick and aged are neglected. The very religions of the world have completed human wretchedness by obdurate the heart, by giving birth to sanguinary superstitions, and by introducing a corruption of morals destructive of the very elements of well-ordered society. Part of these evils are permitted by the supreme Governor, and part inflicted, either by connecting them as consequents to certain actions, or to the constitution of the natural world more immediately; but, whether permitted or inflicted, they are punitive acts of his administration, and present him before us, notwithstanding innumerable instances of his benevolence, as a Being of terrible majesty.*

To remove in part the awful mystery which overhangs such

* "Some men seem to think the only character of the Author of nature to be that of simple absolute benevolence. There may possibly be in the creation, beings to whom he manifests himself under this most amiable of all characters; for it is the most amiable, supposing it not, as perhaps it is not, incompatible with justice; but he manifests himself to us as a righteous Governor. He may consistently with this be simply and absolutely benevolent; but he is, for he has given us a proof in the constitution and conduct of the world that he is, a Governor over servants, as he rewards and punishes us for our actions."—BUTLER'S *Analogy*.

an administration, the most sober Theists of former times, differing from the horde of vulgar blasphemers and metaphysical Atheists who have arisen in our own day, have been ready to suppose another state of being, to which the present has respect, and which may discover some means of connecting this permission of evil, and this infliction of misery, (often on the apparently innocent,) with the character of a Governor of perfect wisdom, equity, and goodness. But in proportion as any one feels himself obliged to admit and to expect a state of future existence, he must feel the necessity of being assured that it will be a felicitous one. Yet should he be conscious of frequent transgressions of the divine law; and at the same time see it demonstrated by facts occurring daily, that in the present life the government of God is thus rigorous; the only fair conclusion to which he can come is, that the divine government will be conducted on precisely the same principles in another, for an infinitely perfect Being changes not. Farther discoveries may then be made; but they may go only to establish this point, that the apparent severity of his dispensations in the present life is quite consistent with justice, and even the continued infliction of punishment with goodness itself, because other moral agents may be benefited by the example. The idea of a future life does not therefore relieve the case. If it be just that man should be punished here, it may be required by the same just regard to the principles of a strictly moral government, that he should be punished hereafter.

If then we are offenders against the majesty of so dread a Being, as the actual administration of the world shows its Governor to be, it is in the highest degree necessary, if there be in him a disposition to forgive our offences, that we should be made acquainted with it, and with the means and conditions upon which his placability can become available to us. If he is not disposed to forgive, we have the greatest cause for alarm; if an inclination to forgive does exist in the divine Mind, there is as strong a reason to presume that it is indicated to us somewhere, as that the law under which we are placed should have been expressly promulgated; and especially if such a scheme of bestowing pardon has been adopted as will

secure the ends of moral government, and lead to our future obedience,—the only one which we can conceive to be worthy of God.

Now it is not necessary to prove at length, what is so obvious, that if we had no method of knowing the will and purposes of God, but by inferring them from his works and his government, we could have no information as to any purpose in the divine Mind to forgive his sinning creatures. The Theist, in order to support this hope, dwells upon the proofs of the goodness of God with which this world abounds, but shuts his eyes upon the demonstrations of his severity; yet these surround him as well as the other, and the argument from the severity of God is as forcible against pardon, as the argument from his goodness is in its favour. At the best, it is left entirely uncertain; a ground is laid for heart-rending doubts, and fearful anticipations; and, for any thing he can show to the contrary, the goodness which God has displayed in nature and providence may only render the offence of man more aggravated, and serve to strengthen the presumption against the forgiveness of a wilful offender, rather than afford him any reason for hope.

The whole of this argument is designed to prove, that had we been left, for the regulation of our conduct, to infer the will and purposes of the supreme Being from his natural works, and his administration of the affairs of the world, our knowledge of both would have been essentially deficient; and it establishes a strong presumption in favour of a direct revelation from God to his creatures, that neither his will concerning us, nor the hope of forgiveness, might be left to dark and uncertain inference, but be the subjects of an express declaration.

CHAPTER III.

Further Presumption of a Direct Revelation, from the Weakness and Corruption of Human Reason, and the Want of Authority in merely Human Opinions.

IF we should allow that a perfect reason, exercised in contemplating the natural works of God, and the course of his moral government, might furnish us, by means of an accurate process of induction, with a sufficient rule to determine the quality of moral actions, and with sufficient motives to obedience, yet the case would not be altered ; for that perfect reason is not to be found among men. It would be useless to urge upon those who deny the doctrine of Scripture as to the fall of man, that his understanding and reason are weakened by the deterioration of his whole intellectual nature. But it will be quite as apposite to the argument to state a fact not to be controverted,—that the reasoning powers of men greatly differ in strength ; and that from premises which all must allow to be somewhat obscure, different inferences would inevitably be drawn. Either, then, the divine law would be what every man might take it to be, and, by consequence, a variable rule,—a position which cannot surely be maintained ; or many persons must fail of duly apprehending it. And though in this case it should be contended, that he is not punishable who obeys the law as far as he knows it, yet surely the ends of a steady and wisely-formed plan of general government would, on this ground, be frustrated. The presumption here also must therefore be in favour of an express declaration of the will of God, in terms which the common understandings of men may apprehend, as the only means by which sufficient moral direction can be given, and effectual control exerted.

The notion, that by rational induction the will of God may be inferred from his acts, in a sufficient degree for every purpose of moral direction, is further vitiated by its assuming that men in general are so contemplative in their habits as to pursue such inquiries with interest ; and so well disposed as,

in most cases, to make them with honesty. Neither of these is true.

The mass of mankind neither are, nor ever have been, contemplative, and must therefore, if not otherwise instructed, remain ignorant of their duty; for questions of virtue, morals, and religion, as may be shown from the contentions of the wisest of men, do not, for the most part, lie level to the minds of the populace without a revelation.*

It is equally a matter of undoubted fact, that, in all questions of morals which restrain the vices, passions, and immediate interests of men, conviction is generally resisted, and the rule is brought down to the practice, rather than the practice raised to the rule; so that the most flimsy sophisms are admitted as arguments, and principles the most lax displace those of rigid rectitude and virtue. This is matter of daily observation, and cannot be denied. The irresistible inference from this is, that, at least, the great body of mankind not being accustomed to intellectual exercises; not having even leisure for them, on account of their being doomed to sordid labours; and not being disposed to conduct the investigation with care and accuracy, would never become acquainted with the will of the supreme Governor, if the knowledge of it were only to

* "If philosophy had gone farther than it did, and, from undeniable principles, given us ethics in a science, like mathematics, in every part demonstrable, this yet would not have been so effectual to man in this imperfect state, nor proper for the cure. The greatest part of mankind want leisure or capacity for demonstration, nor can carry a train of proofs, which, in that way, they must always depend upon for conviction, and cannot be required to assent to till they see the demonstration. Wherever they stick, the teachers are always put upon proof, and must clear the doubt by a thread of coherent deductions from the first principle, how long or how intricate soever that be. And you may as soon hope to have all the day-labourers and tradesmen, the spinsters and dairy-maids, perfect mathematicians, as to have them perfect in ethics this way: Having plain commands is the sure and only course to bring them to obedience and practice. The greatest part cannot know, and therefore they must believe. And I ask, whether one coming from heaven in the power of God, in full and clear evidence and demonstration of miracles, giving plain and direct rules of morality and obedience, be not likelier to enlighten the bulk of mankind, and set them right in their duties, and bring them to do them, than by reasoning with them from general notions, and principles of human reason."—LOCKE'S *Reasonableness of Christianity*.

be obtained from habitual observation and reasoning. Should it be said, that the intellectual and instructed part of mankind ought to teach the rest, it may be replied, that even that would be difficult, because their own knowledge must be communicated to others by the same process of difficult induction through which they attain it themselves, or rational conviction could not be produced in the minds of the learners. The task would, therefore, be hopeless, as to the majority, both from their want of time, and intellectual capacity. But, if practicable, the theistical system has no provision for such instruction; it neither makes it the duty of some to teach, nor of others to learn; it has no authorized teachers; no day of rest from labour on which to collect the auditors; no authorized religious ordinances by which moral truth may be brought home to the ears and the hearts of men; and if it had, its best knowledge being rather contained in diffuse and hesitating speculation, than concentrated in maxims and first principles, embodied in a few plain words, which at once indicate some master-mind fully adequate to the whole subject, and suddenly irradiate the understandings of the most listless and illiterate,—it would be taught in vain.

Let us, however, suppose the truth discovered, the teachers of it appointed, and days for the communication of instruction set apart. With what authority would these teachers be invested? They plead no commission from Him whose will they affect to teach, and they work no miracles in confirmation of the truth of their doctrine. That doctrine cannot, from the nature of things, be mathematically demonstrated so as to enforce conviction; and it would, therefore, be considered, and justly considered, as the opinion of the teacher, and nothing but an opinion, to which every one might listen or not, without any consciousness of violating an obligation; and which every one might and would receive as his own judgment agreed with or dissented from his unauthorized teacher, or as his interests and passions might commend or disparage the doctrine so taught.*

* “Let it be granted—though not true—that all the moral precepts of the Gospel were known by somebody or other amongst mankind before; but

Facts are sufficiently in proof of this. The sages of antiquity were moral teachers ; they founded schools ; they collected disciples ; they placed their fame in their wisdom ; yet there was little agreement among them, even upon the first principles of religion and morals ; and they neither generally reformed their own lives, nor those of others. This is acknowledged by Cicero : “ Do you think that these things had any influence upon the men (a very few excepted) who thought, and wrote, and disputed about them ? Who is there of all the philosophers whose mind, life, and manners were conformable to right reason ? Who ever made his philosophy the law and rule of his life, and not a mere show of his wit and parts ? Who observed his own instructions, and lived in obedience to his own precepts ? On the contrary, many of them were slaves to filthy lusts, many to pride, many to covetousness,” &c.*

Such a system of moral direction and control, then, could it be formed, would bear no comparison to that which is provided by direct and external revelation, of which the doctrine,

where, or how, or of what use, is not considered. Suppose they may be picked up here and there ; some from Solon and Bias, in Greece ; others from Tully, in Italy ; and, to complete the work, let Confucius, as far as China, be consulted ; and Anacharsis, the Scythian, contribute his share : What will all this do to give the world a complete morality, that may be to mankind the unquestionable rule of life and manners ? What would this amount to towards being a steady rule, a certain transcript of a law that we are under ? Did the saying of Aristippus or Confucius give it an authority ? Was Zeno a lawgiver to mankind ? If not, what he or any other philosopher delivered was but a saying of his. Mankind might hearken to it or reject it, as they pleased, or as it suited their interest, passions, principles, or humours ; they were under no obligation ; the opinion of this or that philosopher was of no authority.”—LOCKE'S *Reasonableness*, §c.

“ The truths which the philosophers proved by speculative reason were destitute of some more sensible authority to back them ; and the precepts which they laid down, how reasonable soever in themselves, seemed still to want weight, and to be no more than precepts of men.”—DR. SAMUEL CLARKE.

* *Sed hæc eadem num censes apud eos ipsos valere, nisi admodum paucos, a quibus inventa, disputata, conscripta sunt ? Quotus enim quisque philosophorum invenitur, qui sit ita moratus, ita animo ac vitâ constitutus, ut ratio possit ?* &c.—*Tusc. Quest. 2.*

though delivered by different men, in different ages, is consensaneous throughout ; which is rendered authoritative by divine attestation ; which consists in clear and legislative enunciation, and not in human speculation and laborious inference ; of which the teachers were as holy as their doctrine was sublime ; and which, in all ages, has exerted a powerful moral influence upon the conduct of men. “ I know of but one Phædo and one Polemon throughout all Greece,” saith Origen, “ who were ever made better by their philosophy ; whereas Christianity hath brought back its myriads from vice to virtue.”

All these considerations, then, still further support the presumption, that the will of God has been the subject of express revelation to man ; because such a declaration of it is the only one which can be conceived adequate, complete, of common apprehension, sufficiently authoritative, and adapted to the circumstances of mankind.

CHAPTER IV.

Further Proofs of the Weakness and Uncertainty of Human Reason.

THE opinion, that sufficient notices of the will and purposes of God, with respect to man, may be collected by rational induction from his works and government, attributes too much to the power of human reason, and the circumstances under which, in that case, it must necessarily commence its exercise.

Human reason must be taken, as it is, in fact, a weak and erring faculty, and as subject to have its operations suspended or disturbed by the influence of vicious principles, and attachment to earthly things; neither of which can be denied, however differently they may be accounted for.

It is another consideration of importance, that the exercise of reason is limited by our knowledge; in other words, that it must be furnished with subjects which it may arrange, compare, and judge; for beyond what it clearly conceives its power does not extend.

It does not follow that, because many doctrines in religion, and many rules in morals, carry clear and decided conviction to the judgment instantly upon their being proposed, they were discoverable, in the first instance, by rational induction; any more than that the great and simple truths of philosophy, which have been brought to light by the efforts of men of superior minds, were within the compass of ordinary understandings, because, after they were revealed by those who made the discovery, they instantly commanded the assent of almost all to whom they were proposed. The very first principles of what is called natural religion * are probably of this

* The term "natural religion" is often used equivocally. "Some understand by it every thing in religion with regard to truth and duty, which, when once discovered, may be clearly shown to have a real foundation in the nature and relations of things, and which unprejudiced reason will approve when fairly proposed, and set in a proper light; and, accordingly, very fair and goodly schemes of natural religion have been drawn up by Christian philosophers and Divines, in which they have comprehended a considerable

kind. The reason of man, though it should assent to them, though the demonstration of them should be now easy, may be indebted even for them to the revelation of a superior mind, and that mind the mind of God.*

part of what is contained in the Scripture revelation. In this view, natural religion is not so called because it was originally discovered by natural reason, but because, when once known, it is what the reason of mankind, duly exercised, approves, as founded in truth and nature. Others take natural religion to signify that religion which men discover in the sole exercise of their natural faculties, without higher assistance."—LELAND.

* "When truths are once known to us, though by tradition, we are apt to be favourable to our own parts, and ascribe to our own understanding the discovery of what, in reality, we borrowed from others; or, at least, finding we can prove what at first we learned from others, we are forward to conclude it an obvious truth which, if we had sought, we could not have missed. Nothing seems hard to our understandings that is once known; and because what we see we see with our own eyes, we are apt to overlook or forget the help we had from others who showed it us, and first made us see it, as if we were not at all beholden to them for those truths they opened the way to, and led us into. For knowledge being only of truths that are perceived to be so, we are favourable enough to our own faculties to conclude that they, of their own strength, would have attained those discoveries without any foreign assistance; and that we know those truths by the strength and native light of our own minds, as they did from whom we received them by theirs; only they had the luck to be before us. Thus the whole stock of human knowledge is claimed by every one as his private possession as soon as he, profiting by others' discoveries, has got it into his own mind: And so it is; but not properly by his own single industry, nor of his own acquisition. He studies, it is true, and takes pains to make a progress in what others have delivered; but their pains were of another sort who first brought those truths to light which he afterwards derives from them. He that travels the roads now, applauds his own strength and legs, that have carried him so far in such a scantling of time, and ascribes all to his own vigour; little considering how much he owes to their pains who cleared the woods, drained the bogs, built the bridges, and made the ways passable, without which he might have toiled much with little progress. A great many things which we have been bred up in the belief of from our cradles, and are now grown familiar and, as it were, natural to us, under the Gospel, we take for unquestionable, obvious truths, and easily demonstrable, without considering how long we might have been in doubt or ignorance of them had revelation been silent. And many others are beholden to revelation who do not acknowledge it. It is no diminishing to revelation that reason gives its suffrage too to the truths revelation has discovered; but it is our mistake to think that, because reason confirms them to us, we had the first certain knowledge of them from thence, and in that clear evidence we now possess them."—LOCKE.

This is rendered the more probable, inasmuch as the great principles of all religion, the existence of God, the immortality of the human soul, the accountableness of man, the good or evil quality of the most important moral actions, have, by none who have written upon them, by no legislator, poet, or sage of antiquity, however ancient, been represented as discoveries made by them in the course of rational investigation ; but they are spoken of as things commonly known among men, which they propose to defend, explain, demonstrate, or deny, according to their respective opinions. If we overlook the inspiration of the writings of Moses, they command respect as the most ancient records in the world, and as embodying the religious opinions of the earliest ages ; but Moses nowhere pretends to be the author of any of these fundamental truths. The book of Genesis opens with the words, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth ;” but here the term “God” is used familiarly, and it is taken for granted, that both the name and the idea conveyed by it were commonly received by the people for whom Moses wrote.

The same writer gives the history of ages much higher than his own, and introduces the Patriarchs of the human race holding conversations with one another, in which the leading subjects of religion and morals are often incidentally introduced : But they are never presented to us in the form of discussion ; no Patriarch, however high his antiquity, represents himself as the discoverer of these first principles ; though he might, as Noah, be a preacher of that righteousness which was established upon them. Moses mentions the antediluvians who were inventors of the arts of working metals, and of forming and playing upon musical instruments ; but he introduces no one as the inventor of any of the branches of moral or religious science, though these are so much superior in importance to mankind.

In further illustration it may be observed, that, in point of fact, those views on the subjects just mentioned, which, to the reason of all sober Theists, since the Christian revelation was given, appear the most clear and satisfactory, have been found no where since patriarchal times, except in the Scrip-

tures ; which profess to embody the true religious traditions and revelations of all ages ; or among those whose reason derived principles from these revelations, on which to establish its inferences.

We generally think it a truth easily and convincingly demonstrated, that there is a God ; and yet many of the philosophers of antiquity speak doubtingly on this point, and some of them denied it. At the present day, not merely a few speculative philosophers in the heathen world, but the many millions of the human race who profess the religion of Budhu, not only deny a supreme First Cause, but dispute with subtlety and vehemence against the doctrine.

We feel that our reason rests with full satisfaction in the doctrine, that all things are created by one eternal and self-existent Being ; but the Greek philosophers held, that matter was eternally co-existent with God. This was the opinion of Plato, who has been called the Moses of philosophers. Through the whole *Timæus*, Plato supposes two eternal and independent causes of all things ; one, that *by* which all things are made, which is God ; the other, that *from* which all things are made, which is matter. Dr. Cudworth has in vain attempted to clear Plato of this charge. The learned Dr. Thomas Burnet, who was well acquainted with the opinions of the ancients, says that “ the Ionic, Pythagoric, Platonic, and Stoic schools, all agreed in asserting the eternity of matter ; and that the doctrine, that matter was created out of nothing, seems to have been unknown to the philosophers, and is one of which they had no notion.” Aristotle asserted the eternity of the world, both in matter and form too ; which was but an easy deduction from the former principle, and is sufficiently in proof of its atheistical tendency.

The same doctrine was extensively spread at a very ancient period throughout the east ; and plainly takes away a great part of the foundation of those arguments for the existence of a supreme Deity, on which the moderns have so confidently rested for the demonstration of the existence of God by rational induction, whether drawn from the works of nature or from metaphysical principles ; so much are those able works which

have been written on this subject indebted to that revelation on which their authors too often close their eyes, for the very bases upon which their most convincing arguments are built. The same atheistical results logically followed from the ancient Magian doctrine of two eternal principles, one good, and the other evil ; a notion which also infected the Greek Schools, as appears from the example of Plutarch, and the instances adduced by him.

No one enlightened by the Scriptures, whether he acknowledges his obligations to them, or not, has ever been betrayed into so great an absurdity as to deny the individuality of the human soul ; and yet where the light of revelation has not spread, absurd and destructive to morals as this notion is, it very extensively prevails. The opinion that the human soul is a part of God, inclosed for a short time in matter, but still a portion of his essence, runs through much of the Greek philosophy. It is still more ancient than that ; and, at the present day, the same opinion destroys all idea of accountability among those who in India follow the Brahminical system. “The human soul is God, and the acts of the human soul are therefore the acts of God :” This is the popular argument by which their crimes are justified.

The doctrine of one supreme, all-wise, and uncontrollable Providence commends itself to our reason, as one of the noblest and most supporting of truths ; but we are not to overlook the source from whence even those draw it who think the reason of man equal to its full developement. So far were Pagans from being able to conceive so lofty a thought, that the wisest of them invented subordinate agents to carry on the affairs of the world ; beings often divided among themselves, and subject to human passions ; thereby destroying the doctrine of Providence, and taking away the very foundation of human trust in a supreme Power. This invention of subordinate deities gave birth to idolatry, which is sufficiently in proof both of its extent and antiquity.

The beautiful and well-sustained series of arguments which have often in modern times been brought to support the presumption, that the human soul is immortal, may be read with

profit ; but it is not to be accounted for, that those who profess to confine themselves to human reason in the inquiry should argue with so much greater strength than the philosophers of ancient times, except that they have received assistance from a source which they are unfair enough not to acknowledge. Some fine passages on this subject may be collected from Plato, Cicero, Seneca, and others ; but we must take them with others which express, sometimes doubt, and sometimes unbelief. With us this is a matter of general belief ; but not so with the generality of either ancient or modern Pagans. The same darkness which obscured the glory of God, proportionably diminished the glory of man, his true and proper immortality. The very ancient notion of an absorption of souls back again into the divine essence was, with the ancients, what we know it to be now in the metaphysical system of the Hindoos, a denial of individual immortality ; nor have the demonstrations of reason done any thing to convince the other grand division of metaphysical Pagans into which modern Heathenism is divided, the followers of Budhu, who believe in the total annihilation of both men and gods after a series of ages,—a point of faith held probably by the majority of the present race of mankind.*

▪ “ The religion of Budhu,” says Dr. Davy, “ is more widely extended than any other religion. It appears to be the religion of the whole of Tartary, of China, of Japan, and their dependencies, and of all the countries between China and the Burrampooter.

“ The Budhists do not believe in the existence of a supreme Being, self-existent and eternal, the Creator and Preserver of the universe : Indeed, it is doubtful if they believe in the existence and operation of any cause besides fate and necessity, to which they seem to refer all changes in the moral and physical world. They appear to be materialists in the strictest sense of the term, and to have no notion of pure spirit or mind. *Prane* and *hitta*, life and intelligence, the most learned of them appear to consider identical ; seated in the heart, radiating from thence to different parts of the body, like heat from a fire ; uncreated, without beginning, at least that they know of ; capable of being modified by a variety of circumstances, like the breath in different musical instruments ; and like a vapour, capable of passing from one body to another ; and like a flame, liable to be extinguished and totally annihilated. Gods, demons, men, reptiles, even the minutest and most imperfect animalcules, they consider as similar beings, formed of the four elements, heat, air, water, and that which is tangible, and animated by *prane* and *hitta*. They believe

These instances might be enlarged ; but they amply show that they who speak of the sufficiency of human reason in matters of morals and religion, neglect almost all the facts which the history of human opinion furnishes ; and that they owe all their best views to that fountain of inspiration from which they so criminally turn aside. For how otherwise can the instances we have just mentioned be explained ? And how is it that those fundamental principles in morals and religion which modern philosophers have exhibited as demonstrable by the unassisted powers of the human mind, were either held doubtfully, or connected with some manifest absurdity, or utterly denied, by the wisest moral teachers among the Gentiles who lived before the Christian revelation was given ? They had the same works of God to behold, and the same course of providence to reason from ; to neither of which were they inattentive. They had intellectual endowments, which have been the admiration of all subsequent ages ; and their reason was rendered acute and discriminative by the discipline of mathematical and dialectic science. They had every thing which the moderns have, except the Bible ; and yet on points which have been generally settled, among the moral philosophers of our own age, as fundamental to natural religion, they had no just views, and no settled conviction. “The various apprehensions of wise men,” says Cicero, “will justify the doubtings and demurs of sceptics ; and it will then be sufficient to blame them, *si aut consenserint alii, aut erit inventus aliquis, qui quid verum sit invenerit*, when others agree, or any one has found out the truth. We say not, that nothing is true ; but that some false things are annexed to all that is true, *tantâ similitudine ut iis nulla sit certa judicandi et assentiendi nota*, and that with so much likeness, that there is no certain note of judging what is true, or assenting to it. We deny not that something may be true ; *percipi posse negamus*, but we deny that it can be perceived so to be ;

that a man may become a god or a demon ; or that a god may become a man or an animalcule ; that ordinary death is merely a change of form ; and that this change is almost infinite, and bounded only by annihilation, which they esteem the acme of happiness !”—*Account of Ceylon*.

for *quid habemus in rebus bonis et malis explorati*, what have we certain concerning good and evil? Nor for this are we to be blamed, but nature, which has hidden the truth in the deep; *naturam accusa, quæ profundo veritatem penitus abstruserit*.”*

On this subject Dr. Samuel Clarke, though so great an advocate of natural religion, concedes that, “of the philosophers, some argued themselves out of the belief of the very being of a God; some by ascribing all things to chance, others to absolute fatality, equally subverted all true notions of religion, and made the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment, needless and impossible. Some professed open immorality; others, by subtle distinctions, patronised particular vices. The better sort of them, who were most celebrated, discoursed with the greatest reason, yet with much uncertainty and doubtfulness, concerning things of the highest importance,—the providence of God in governing the world; the immortality of the soul; and a future judgment.”

If such facts prove the weakness and insufficiency of human reason, those just thoughts respecting God—his providence, his will, and a future state—which sometimes appear in the writings of the wisest Heathen, are not, however, on the contrary, to be attributed to its strength. Even if they were, the argument for the sufficiency of reason would not be much advanced by them; for the case would then be, that the reason, which occasionally reached the truth, had not firmness enough to hold it fast; and the pinion which sometimes bore the mind into fields of light, could not maintain it in its elevation. But it cannot even be admitted that the truth which occasionally breaks forth in their works was the discovery of their own powers. There is much evidence to show that they were indebted to a traditional knowledge much earlier than their own day, and that moral and religious knowledge among them received occasional and important accessions from the descendants of Abraham; a people who possessed records

* *Vide De Nat. Deorum*, lib. 1, n. 10, 11. *Acad. Qu.*, lib. 2, n. 66, 120.

which,—laying aside the question of their inspiration for the present,—all candid Theists themselves will acknowledge, contain noble and just views of God, and a correct morality. Whilst it cannot be proved that human reason made a single discovery in either moral or religious truth, it may be satisfactorily established that just notions, as to both, were placed within its reach ; which it first obscured, and then corrupted.

CHAPTER V.

The Origin of those Truths which are found in the Writings and Religious Systems of the Heathen.

WE have seen that some of the leading truths of religion and morals which are adverted to by heathen writers, or assumed in heathen systems, are spoken of as truths previously known to the world, and with which mankind were familiar. Also, that no legislator, poet, or philosopher of antiquity, ever pretended to the discovery of the doctrines of the existence of a God, of providence, a future state, and of the rules by which actions are determined to be good or evil; whether these opinions were held by them with full conviction of their certainty, or only doubtfully. That they were transmitted by tradition from an earlier age, or were brought from some collateral source of information, or that they flowed from both, are, therefore, the only rational conclusions.

To tradition the wisest of the Heathen often acknowledge themselves indebted.

A previous age of superior truth, rectitude, and happiness, sometimes called the "golden age," was a commonly-received notion among them; it is, at least, as high as Hesiod, who rivals Homer in antiquity. It was likewise a common opinion that sages existed in ages anterior to their own, who received knowledge from the gods, and communicated it to men. The wisest Heathens, notwithstanding the many great things said of nature and reason, derive the origin, obligation, and efficacy of law from the gods alone. "No mortal," says Plato in his Republic, "can make laws to purpose." Demosthenes calls law *εὐρημα καὶ δῶρον Θεῶν*, "the invention and gift of God." They speak of *νόμοι ἀγράφοι*, "unwritten laws," and ascribe both them, and the laws which were introduced by their various legislators, to the gods. Xenophon represents it as the opinion

of Socrates, that the unwritten laws received over the whole earth (which it was impossible that all mankind—as being of different languages, and not to be assembled in one place—should make) were given by the gods.* Plato is express on this subject: “After a certain flood, which but few escaped, on the increase of mankind they had neither letters, writing, nor laws, but obeyed the manners and institutions of their fathers as laws; but when colonies separated from them, they took an elder for their leader, and, in their new settlements, retained the customs of their ancestors, those especially which related to their gods; and thus transmitted them to their posterity; they imprinted them on the minds of their sons, and they did the same to their children: This was the origin of right laws, and of the different forms of government.”†

This so exactly harmonizes with the Mosaic account as to the flood of Noah, the origin of nations, and the divine institution of religion and laws, that either the patriarchal tradi-

* XEN. *Mem.*, lib. 4, cap. 4, sect. 19, 20. To the same effect is that noble passage of Cicero cited by Lactantius out of his work *De Republicâ*:—

“*Est quidem vera lex, recta ratio, naturæ congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quæ vocet ad officium jubendo, vetando a fraude deterreat; quæ tamen neque probos frustra jubet, aut vetat; nec improbos jubendo aut vetando movet. Huic legi nec abrogari fas est; nec derogari ex hac aliquid licet; neque tota abrogari potest. Nec vero aut per senatum, aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus; neque est quærendum, explanator, aut interpret ejus alius. Nec enim alia lex Romæ, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac; sed et omnes gentes, et omni tempore, una lex et sempiterna et immutabilis continebit; unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium Deus, ille legis hujus inventor, disceptator, lator; cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet, ac naturam hominis aspernabitur; atque hoc ipso luet maximas pœnas, etiamsi cœtera supplicia, quæ putantur, effugerit.*” From which it is clear that Cicero acknowledged a law antecedent to all human civil institutions, and independent of them, binding upon all, constant and perpetual, the same in all times and places, not one thing at Rome and another at Athens; of an authority so high that no human power had the right to alter or annul it; having God for its Author, in his character of universal Master and Sovereign; taking hold of the very consciences of men, and following them with its animadversions, though they should escape the hand of man, and the penalties of human codes.

† *De Leg.*, 3.

tions embodied in the writings of Moses had gone down with great exactness to the times of Plato ; or the writings of Moses were known to him ; or he had gathered the substance of them, in his travels, from the Egyptian, the Chaldean, or the Magian philosophers.

Nor is this an unsupported hypothesis. The evidence is most abundant, that the primitive source from whence every great religious and moral truth was drawn must be fixed in that part of the world where Moses places the dwelling of the Patriarchs of the human race, who walked with God, and received the law from his mouth.* There, in the earliest times, civilization and polity were found, whilst the rest of the earth was covered with savage tribes ; a sufficient proof that Asia was the common centre from whence the rest of mankind dispersed ; who, as they wandered from these primitive seats, and addicted themselves more to the chase than to agriculture, became, in most instances, barbarous.†

In the multifarious and bewildering superstitions of all nations we also discover a very remarkable substratum of common tradition and religious faith.

The practice of sacrifice, which may at once be traced into all nations, and to the remotest antiquity, affords an eminent proof of the common origin of religion ; inasmuch as no reason drawn from the nature of the rite itself, or the circumstances of men, can be given for the universality of the practice ; and

* “ The east was the source of knowledge, from whence it was communicated to the western parts of the world. There the most precious remains of ancient tradition were found ; thither the most celebrated Greek philosophers travelled in quest of science, or the knowledge of things divine and human ; and thither the lawgivers had recourse, in order to their being instructed in laws and civil policy.”—LELAND.

† The speculations of infidels as to the gradual progress of the original men from the savage life, and the invention of language, arts, laws, &c., have been too much countenanced by philosophers bearing the name of Christ, some of them even holding the office of Teachers of his religion. The writings of Moses sufficiently show that there never was a period in which the original tribes of men were in a savage state ; and the gradual process of the development of a higher condition is a chimera. To those who profess to believe the Scriptures, their testimony ought to be sufficient ; to those who do not, they are, at least, as good history as any other.

as it is clearly a positive institute, and opposed to the interests of men, it can only be accounted for by an injunction, issued at a very early period of the world, and solemnly imposed. This injunction, indeed, received a force, either from its original appointment, or from subsequent circumstances, from which the human mind could never free itself. "There continued," says Dr. Shuckford, "for a long time among the nations usages which show that there had been an ancient universal religion; several traces of which appeared in the rites and ceremonies that were observed in religious worship. Such was the custom of sacrifices expiatory and precatory, both the sacrifices of animals and the oblations of wine, oil, and the fruits and products of the earth. These and other things which were in use among the Patriarchs, obtained also among the Gentiles."

The events and some of the leading opinions of the earliest ages, mentioned in Scripture, may also be traced among the most barbarous, as well as in the oriental, the Grecian, and the Roman, systems of mythology. Such are the formation of the world; the fall and corruption of man; the hostility of a powerful and supernatural agent of wickedness under his appropriate and scriptural emblem, the serpent; the destruction of the world by water; the re peopling of it by the sons of Noah; the expectation of its final destruction by fire; and, above all, the promise of a great and divine Deliverer.*

The only method of accounting for this is, that the same traditions were transmitted from the progenitors of the different families of mankind after the flood; that in some places they were strengthened and the impressions deepened by successive revelations, which assumed the first traditions, as being of divine original, for their basis, and thus renewed the knowledge which had formerly been communicated, at the very time they enlarged it; and further, that from the written revelations which were afterwards made to one people, some rays of reflected light were constantly glancing upon the surrounding nations.

* See note A, at the end of this chapter.

Nor are we at a loss to trace this communication of truth from a common source to the Gentile nations ; and also to show that they actually did receive accessions of information, both directly and indirectly, from a people who retained the primitive theological system in its greatest purity.

We shall see sufficient reasons, when we come to speak on that subject, to conclude that all mankind have descended from one common pair.

If man is now a moral agent, the first man must be allowed to have been a moral agent, and, as such, under rules of obedience ; in which rules it is far more probable that he should be instructed by his Maker by means of direct communication, than that he should be left to collect the will of his Maker from observation and experience. Those who deny the Scripture account of the introduction of death into the world, and think the human species were always liable to it, are bound to admit a revelation from God to the first pair as to the wholesomeness of certain fruits, and the destructive habits of certain animals ; or our first progenitors would have been far more exposed to danger from deleterious fruits, &c., and in a more miserable condition through their fears, than any of their descendants, because they were without experience, and could have no information.* But it is far more probable, that they should have express information as to the will of God concerning their conduct ; for until they had settled, by a course of rational induction, what was right, and what wrong, they could not, properly speaking, be moral agents ; and from the difficulties of such an inquiry, especially until they had had a long experience of the steady course of nature, and the effect of certain actions upon themselves and society, they might possibly arrive at very different conclusions.†

But in whatever way the moral and religious knowledge of the first man was obtained, if he is allowed to have been under an efficient law, he must at least have known, in order

* See Delany's *Revelation Examined with Candour*, Dissertations 1 and 2.

† "It is very probable," says Puffendorf, "that God taught the first men the chief heads of natural law."

to the right regulation of himself, every truth essential to religion, and to personal, domestic, and social morals. The truth on these subjects was as essential to him as to his descendants, and more especially because he was so soon to be the head and the paternal governor, by a natural relation, of a numerous race, and to possess, by virtue of that office, great influence over them. If we assume, therefore, that the knowledge of the first man was taught to his children, (and it were the greatest absurdity to suppose the contrary,) then, whether he received his information on the principal doctrines of religion, and the principal rules of morals, by express revelation from God, or by the exercise of his own natural powers, all the great principles of religion, and of personal, domestic, and social morals, must have been at once communicated to his children, immediately descending from him; and we clearly enough see the reason why the earliest writers on these subjects never pretend to have been the discoverers of the leading truths of morals and religion, but speak of them as opinions familiar to men, and generally received. This primitive religious and moral system, as far as regards first principle, and all their important particular applications, was also complete, or there had been neither efficient religion nor morality in the first ages; (which is contrary to all tradition and to all history;) and that this system was actually transmitted, is clear from this, that the wisdom of very early ages consisted not so much in natural and speculative science, as in moral notions, rules of conduct, and an acquaintance with the opinions of the wise of still earlier periods.

The few persons through whom this system was transmitted to Noah, (for in fact Methuselah was contemporary both with Adam and Noah,) rendered any great corruption impossible; and therefore the crimes charged upon the antediluvians are violence and other immoralities, rather than the corruption of truth; and Noah was a Preacher of righteousness, rather than a restorer of doctrine.

The flood being so awful and marked a declaration of God's anger against the violation of the laws of this primitive religion, would give great force and sanction to it, as a religious system,

in the minds of Noah's immediate descendants.* The existence of God, his providence, his favour to the good, his anger against evil-doers, the great rules of justice and mercy, the practice of a sacrificial worship, the observance of the Sabbath, the promise of a Deliverer, and other similar tenets, were among the articles and religious rites of this primitive system. Nor can any satisfactory account be given, why they were transmitted to so many people, in different parts of the world ; why they have continued to glimmer through the darkness of Paganism to this day ; why we find them more or less recognised in the mythology, traditions, and customs of almost all ages ancient and modern, except that they received some original sanction of great efficacy, deeply fixing them in the hearts of the Patriarchs of all the families of men. Those who deny the revelations contained in the Scriptures have no means of accounting for these facts, which in themselves are indisputable. They have no theory respecting them which is not too childish to deserve serious refutation, and they usually prefer to pass them over in silence. But the believer in the Bible can account for them, and he alone. The destruction of wicked men by the flood put the seal of Heaven upon the religious system transmitted from Adam ; and under the force of this divine and unequivocal attestation of its truth, the sons and descendants of Noah went forth into their different settlements, bearing for ages the deep impression of its sanctity and authority. This impression, it is true, at length gave way to vice, superstition, and false philosophy ; but superstition perverted truth, rather than displaced it ; and the doctrines, the history, and even the hopes of the first ages, were never

* Whatever may be thought respecting the circumstances of the flood as mentioned by Moses, there is nothing in that event, considered as the punishment of a guilty race, and as giving an attestation of God's approbation of right principles and a right conduct, to which a consistent Theist can object. For if the will of God is to be collected from observing the course of nature and providence, such signal and remarkable events in his government as the deluge, whether universal or only co-extensive with the existing race of men, may be expected to occur ; and especially when an almost universal punishment, as connected with an almost universal wickedness, so strikingly indicated an observant and a righteous government.

entirely banished even from those fables which became baleful substitutes for their simplicity.

In the family of Abraham the true God was acknowledged. Melchizedek was the Sovereign of one of the nations of Canaan, and Priest of the most high God ; and his subjects must therefore have been worshippers of the true Divinity. Abimeleck, the Philistine, and his people, both in Abraham's days and in Isaac's, were also worshippers of Jehovah, and acknowledged the same moral principles which were held sacred in the elect family. The revelations and promises made to Abraham would enlarge the boundaries of religious knowledge, both among the descendants of Ishmael and those of his sons by Keturah ; as those made to Shem would, with the patriarchal theology, be transmitted to his posterity,—the Persians, Assyrians, and Mesopotamians.* In Egypt, even in the days of Joseph, he and the King of Egypt speak of the true God, as of a Being mutually known and acknowledged. Upon the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan, they found a few persons in that perhaps primitive seat of idolatry who acknowledged Jehovah to be God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath. Through the branch of Esau the knowledge of the true religion would pass from the family of Isaac, with its further illustrations in the covenants made with Abraham, to his descendants. Job and his friends, who probably lived between Abraham and Moses, were professors of the patriarchal religion ; and their discourses show, that it was both a sublime and a comprehensive system. The plagues of Egypt and the miraculous escape of the Israelites, and the destruction of the Canaanitish nations, were all parts of an awful controversy between the true God and the idolatry spreading in the world ; and could not fail of being largely noised abroad among the neighbouring nations, and of making the religion of the Israelites known.† Balaam, a Gentile Prophet, intermixes with his predictions many brief but eloquent assertions of the first principles of religion ; the omnipotence of Deity,

* See Bishop Horsley's *Dissertations* before referred to ; and Leland's *View of the Necessity of Revelation*, Part i., chap. 2.

† Jenkin's *Reasonableness of Christianity*, vol. i., chap. 2.

his universal providence, and the immutability of his counsels ; and the names and epithets which he applies to the supreme Being are, as Bishop Horsley observes, the very same which are used by Moses, Job, and the inspired writers of the Jews, namely, “ God,” “ the Almighty,” “ the Most High,” and “ Jehovah ;” which is a proof that, gross as the corruptions of idolatry were now become, the patriarchal religion was not forgotten, nor its language become obsolete.

The frequent and public restorations of the Israelites to the principles of the patriarchal religion, after they had lapsed into idolatry, and fallen under the power of other nations, could not fail to make their peculiar opinions known among those with whom they were so often in relations of amity or war, of slavery or dominion. We have evidence collateral to that of the Scriptures, that the building of the celebrated temple of Solomon, and the fame of the wisdom of that Monarch, produced not only a wide-spread rumour, but also—as it was intended by divine wisdom and goodness—moral effects upon the people of distant nations ; and that the Abyssinians received the Jewish religion after the visit of the Queen of Sheba, the principles of that religion being probably found to accord with those ancient traditions of the Patriarchs which remained among them.* The intercourse between the Jews and the states of Syria and Babylon on the one hand, and Egypt on the other, powers which rose to great eminence and influence in the ancient world, was maintained for many ages. Their frequent captivities and dispersions would tend to pre-

* The Princes of Abyssinia claim descent from Menilek, the son of Solomon, by the Queen of Sheba. The Abyssinians say she was converted to the Jewish religion. The succession is hereditary in the line of Solomon ; and the device of their Kings is a lion passant, proper upon a field gules ; and their motto, “ The lion of the race of Solomon and tribe of Judah hath overcome.” The Abyssinian eunuch who was met by Philip was not properly a Jewish proselyte, but an Abyssinian believer in Moses and the Prophets. Christianity spread in this country at an early period ; but many of the inhabitants, to this day, are of the Jewish religion. Tyre, also, must have derived an accession of religious information from its intercourse with the Israelites in the time of Solomon ; and we find Hiram the King blessing the Lord God of Israel as “ the Maker of heaven and earth.”

serve in part, and in part to revive, the knowledge of the once common and universal faith ; for we have instances that, in the worst periods of their history, there were, among the captive Israelites, those who adhered with heroic steadfastness to their own religion. We have the instance of the female captive in the house of Naaman the Syrian ; and, at a later period, the sublime example of the three Hebrew youths, and of Daniel, in the court of Nebuchadnezzar. The decree of this Prince, after the deliverance of Shadrach and his companions, ought not to be slightly passed over. It contained a public proclamation of the supremacy of Jehovah, in opposition to the gods of his country ; and that Monarch, after his recovery from a singular disease, became himself a worshipper of the true God ; both of which are circumstances which could not but excite attention, among a learned and curious people, to the religious tenets of the Jews. We may add to this, also, that great numbers of the Jews, preserving their Scriptures, and publicly worshipping the true God, never returned from the Babylonish captivity, but remained in various parts of that extensive empire after it was conquered by the Persians. The Chaldean philosophic schools, to which many of the Greek sages resorted for instruction, were, therefore, never without the means of acquaintance with the theological system of the Jews, however degenerate, in process of time, their wise men became, by addicting themselves to judicial astrology ; and to the same sacred source the conquest of Babylon conducted the Persians.

Cyrus, the celebrated subverter of the Babylonian monarchy, was of the Magian religion, whose votaries worshipped God under the emblem of fire, but held an independent and eternal principle of darkness and evil. He was, however, somewhat prepared, by his hostility to idols, to listen to the tenets of the Jews ; and his favour to them sufficiently shows that the influence which Daniel's character, the remarkable facts which had occurred respecting him at the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and the predictions of his own success by Isaiah, had exerted on his mind was very great. In his decree for the rebuilding of the temple, recorded in Ezra i., and 2 Chron.

xxxvi. 23, he acknowledges “Jehovah to be the God of heaven,” who had given him his kingdom, and had charged him to rebuild the temple. Nor could this testimony in favour of the God of the Jews be without effect upon his subjects ; one proof of which, and of the influence of Judaism upon the Persians, is, that, in a short time after his reign, a considerable improvement in some particulars, and alteration in others, took place in the Magian religion, by an evident admixture with it of the tenets and ceremonies of the Jews.* And whatever improvements the theology of the Persians thus received,—and they were not few nor unimportant ; whatever information they acquired as to the origin of the world, the events of the first ages, and questions of morals and religion, subjects after which the ancient philosophers made keen and eager inquiries ; they could not but be known to the learned Greeks, whose intercourse with the Persians was continued for so long a period ; and be transmitted, also, into that part of India into which the Persian Monarchs pushed their conquests.

It is, indeed, unquestionable, that the credit in which the Jews stood in the Persian empire ; the singular events which brought them into notice with the Persian Monarchs ; the favour they afterwards experienced from Alexander the Great and his successors, who reigned in Egypt, where they became so numerous, and so generally spoke the Greek, that a translation of the Scriptures into that language was rendered necessary ; and their having, in most of the principal cities of the Roman empire, even when most extended, indeed in all the cities which were celebrated for refinement and philosophy, their synagogues and public worship,—in Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, at Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, &c., as we read in the Acts of the Apostles, and that for a long time before the Christian era ; rendered their tenets very widely known : And as these events took place after their final reformation from idolatry, the opinions by which they were distinguished were those, substantially, that are taught in the Scriptures. The

* See note B, at the end of this chapter.

above statements—to say nothing of the fact that the character, office, opinions, and writings of Moses were known to many of the ancient philosophers and historians, who mention him by name, and describe the religion of the Jews—are sufficient to account for those opinions and traditions with which we occasionally meet in the writings of the Greek and Roman sages, that have the greatest correspondence with truth, and agree best with the holy Scriptures. They flowed in upon them from many channels, branching out, at different times, from the fountain of truth ; but they were received by them, generally, as mere traditions or philosophic notions, which they thought themselves at liberty to adopt, reject, modify, or pervert, as the principles of their schools, or their own fancy, led them.

Let, then, every question which respects inspiration, miracles, prophecies, be for the present omitted ; the following conclusions may properly close these observations :—

1. That, as a history of early opinions and events, the Scriptures have, at least, as much authority as any history of ancient times whatever ; nay, the very idea of their sacredness, whether well-founded or not, renders their historical details more worthy of credit, because that idea led to their more careful preservation.

2. That their history is often confirmed by ancient pagan traditions and histories ; and in no material point, or on any good evidence, contradicted.

3. That those fundamental principles of what is called natural religion which are held by sober Theists, and by them denominated “ rational,” the discovery of which they attribute to the unassisted understanding of man, are to be found in the earliest of these sacred writings, and are there supposed to have existed in the world previous to the date of those writings themselves.

4. That a religion founded on common notions and common traditions, comprehensive both in doctrines and morals, existed in very early periods of the world ; and that, from the agreement of almost all mythological systems in certain doctrines, rites, and traditions, it is reasonable to believe that

this primitive theology passed, in some degree, into all nations.

5. That it was retained most perfectly among those of the descendants of Abraham who formed the Israelitish state, and subsisted as a nation collaterally with the successive great empires of antiquity for many ages.

6. That the frequent dispersions of great numbers of that people, either by war or from choice, and their residence in or near the seats of ancient learning with their sacred books, and in the habit of observing their public worship, as in Chaldea, Egypt, Persia, and other parts of the ancient world, and the signal notice into which they and their opinions were occasionally brought, could not but make their cosmogony, theology, laws, and history very extensively known.

7. That the spirit of inquiry in many of the ancient philosophers of different countries led them to travel for information on these very subjects, and often into those countries where the patriarchal religion had formerly existed in great purity ; and where the tenets of the Jews, which tended to revive or restore it, were well known.

8. That there is sufficient evidence that these tenets were in fact known to many of the sages of the greatest name, and to schools of the greatest influence ; who, however, regarding them only as traditions or philosophical opinions, interwove such of them as best agreed with their views into their own systems, and rejected or refined upon others ; so that no permanent and convincing system of morals and religion was, after all, wrought out among themselves ; whilst they left the populace generally to the gross ignorance and idolatry in which they were involved.*

* The readiness of the philosophers of antiquity to seize upon every notion which could aid them in their speculations, is manifest by the use which those of them who lived when Christianity began to be known and to acquire credit, made of its discoveries to give greater splendour to their own systems. The thirst of knowledge carried the ancient sages to the most distant persons and places in search of wisdom ; nor did the later philosophers, any more than modern infidels, neglect the superior light of Christianity, when brought to their own doors ; but they were equally backward to acknowledge the obligation. "As the ancients," says Justin Martyr, "had borrowed from the Pro-

9. Finally, that so far from there being any evidence, that any of those fundamental truths of religion or morals which may occasionally appear in their writings were discovered by their unassisted reason, we can trace them to an earlier age, and can show that the sages had the means of access to higher sources of information ; whilst, on the other hand, it may be exhibited as a proof of the weakness of the human mind, and the corruptness of the human heart, that they generally involved in doubt the great principles which they thus received ; built upon them fanciful systems, destructive of their moral efficacy ; and mixed them with errors of the most deteriorating character.*

The last observation will be more fully illustrated in the ensuing chapter.

phets, so did the moderns from the Gospel." Tertullian observes in his Apology, " Which of your poets, which of your sophists, have not drunk from the fountains of the Prophets ? It is from these sacred sources, likewise, that your philosophers have refreshed their thirsty spirits ; and if they found any thing in the holy Scriptures to please their fancy, or to serve their hypotheses, they turned it to their own purpose, and made it serve their curiosity ; not considering these writings to be sacred and unalterable, nor understanding their sense ; every one taking or leaving, adopting or remodeling, as his imagination led him. Nor do I wonder that the philosophers played such foul tricks with the Old Testament, when I find some of the same generation among ourselves, who have made as bold with the New, and composed a deadly mixture of Gospel and opinion, led by a philosophizing vanity."

It was from conversing with a Christian that Epictetus learned to reform the doctrine, and abase the pride, of the Stoics ; nor is it to be imagined that Marcus Antoninus, Maximus Tyrius, and others were ignorant of the Christian doctrine.

Rousseau admits, that the modern philosopher derives his better notions on many subjects from those very Scriptures which he reviles ; from the early impressions of education ; from living and conversing in a Christian country, where those doctrines are publicly taught, and where, in spite of himself, he imbibes some portion of that religious knowledge which the sacred writings have every where diffused.—*Works*, vol. ix., p. 71. 1764.

* See note C, at the end of this chapter.

NOTE A.—PAGE 36.

THE illustration of the particulars mentioned in the paragraph, from which reference is made to this note, may be given under different heads.

THE FORMATION OF THE WORLD FROM CHAOTIC MATTER.

SOME remains of the sentiments of the ancient Chaldeans are preserved in the pages of Syncellus from Berosus and Alexander Polyhistor; and when the tradition is divested of its fabulous dress, we may trace in the account a primordial watery chaos, a separation of the darkness from light, and of earth from heaven, the production of man from the dust of the earth, and an infusion of divine reason into the man so formed. The cosmogony of the Phenicians, as detailed by Sanchoniatho, makes the principle of the universe a dark air, and a turbulent chaos. The ancient Persians taught, that God created the world at six different times, in manifest allusion to the six days' work, as described by Moses. In the Institutes of Menu, a Hindoo tract, supposed by Sir William Jones to have been composed one thousand two hundred and eighty years before the Christian era, the universe is represented as involved in darkness, when the sole self-existing Power, himself undiscerned, made the world discernible. With a thought he first created the waters, which are called *Nara*, or "the Spirit of God;" and since they were his first *ayana*, or "place of motion," he is thence named *Narayana*, or "moving on the waters." The order of the creation in the ancient traditions of the Chinese is, the heavens were first formed; the foundations of the earth were next laid; the atmosphere was then diffused round the habitable globe, and last of all man was created. The formation of the world from chaos may be discovered in the traditions of our Gothic ancestors.—See the *Edda*, and FABER'S *Horæ Mosaicæ*, vol. i., p. 3.

In the ancient Greek philosophy we trace the same tradition; and Plato clearly borrowed the materials of his account of the origin of things, either from Moses, or from traditions which had proceeded from the same source. Moses speaks of God in the plural form: "In the beginning Gods created the heaven and the earth;" and Plato has a kind of Trinity in his *το αγαθον*, "the good," *ves*, or "intellect," who was properly the Demiurgus, or former of the world, and his Psyche, or universal mundane soul, the cause of all the motion which is in the world. He also represents the first matter out of which the universe was formed as a rude chaos. In the Greek and Latin poets we have frequent allusions to the same fact; and in some of them highly poetic descriptions of the chaotic state of the

world, and of its reduction to order. When America was discovered, traditions, bearing a very remarkable resemblance to the history of Moses on various subjects, were found among the semi-civilized nations of that continent. Gomara states in his history, that the Peruvians believed, that, at the beginning of the world, there came from the north a being named Con, who levelled mountains, and raised hills, solely by the word of his mouth; that he filled the earth with men and women whom he had created, giving them fruits and bread, and all things necessary for their subsistence; but that, being offended with their transgressions, he deprived them of the blessings which they had originally enjoyed, and afflicted their lands with sterility.

“The number of days employed in the work of creation,” says Mr. Faber, “and the divine rest on the seventh day, produced that peculiar measure of time, the weeks, which is purely arbitrary, and which does not spring, like a day, or a month, or a year, from the natural motions of the heavenly bodies. Hence the general adoption of the hebdomadal period is itself a proof how widely a knowledge of the true cosmogonical system was diffused among the posterity of Noah.” Thus in almost every part of the globe, from Europe to the shores of India, and anciently among the Greeks, Romans, and Goths, as well as among the Jews, we find the week used as a familiar measure of time, and some traces of the Sabbath.

THE FALL OF MAN.

THAT the human race were once innocent and happy, is an opinion of high antiquity, and of great extent among the Gentile nations. The passages to this effect in the classical poets are well known. It is asserted in the Edda, the record of the opinions of our Scythian forefathers. “There can be little doubt,” says Maurice, in his History of Hindostan, “but that by the Satya age, or age of perfection, the Brachmins obscurely allude to the state of perfection and happiness enjoyed by man in paradise. Then justice, truth, philanthropy, were practised among all the orders and classes of mankind.” That man is a fallen creature, is now the universal belief of this class of Pagans; and the degeneracy of the human soul, its native and hereditary degeneracy, runs through much of the Greek philosophy. The immediate occasion of the fall, the frailty of the woman, we find also alluded to equally in classical fable, in ancient Gothic traditions, and among various barbarous tribes. A curious passage to this effect occurs in Campbell’s Travels among the Boschuana Hottentots.

THE SERPENT.

THE agency of an evil and malignant spirit is found also in these widely-extended ancient traditions. Little doubt can be entertained but

that the generally received notion of good and evil demons grounded itself upon the Scripture account of good and evil angels. Serpent-worship was exceedingly general, especially in Egypt and the east; and this is not to be accounted for but as it originated from a superstitious fear of the malignant demon, who, under that animal form, brought death into the world, and obtained a destructive dominion over men. That in ancient sculptures and paintings, the serpent symbol is sometimes emblematical of wisdom, eternity, and other moral ideas, may be allowed; but it often appears connected with representations which prove that under this form the evil principle was worshipped; and that human sacrifices were offered to gratify the cruelty of him who was a "murderer from the beginning." In the model of the tomb of Psammis, made by Mr. Belzoni, and recently exhibited in London, and in the plates which accompany his work on Egypt, are seen various representations of monstrous serpents with the tribute of human heads which had been offered to them. This is still more strikingly exemplified in a copy of part of the interior of an Egyptian tomb, at Biban al Melook, in Richardson's *Travels in Egypt*. Before an enormous serpent three men are represented on their knees, with their heads just struck off by the executioner; "while the serpent erects his crest to a level with their throats, ready to drink the stream of life as it gurgles from their veins." This was probably the serpent Typhon of the ancient Egyptians; the same as the Python of the Greeks; and, as observed by Mr. Faber, "the notion that the Python was oracular, may have sprung from a recollection of the vocal responses, which the tempter gave to Eve under the borrowed figure of that reptile." By consulting Moore's *Hindu Pantheon*; it will be seen that the serpent Caliya is represented as the decided enemy of the mediatorial God, Krishna, whom he persecutes, and on whom he inflicts various sufferings, though he is at length vanquished. Krishna, pressed within the folds of the serpent, and then triumphing over him, and bruising his head beneath his feet, is the subject of a very ancient Hindoo bas-relief; and carries with it its own interpretation.

In the Edda, *Fab. 16*, "the great serpent is said to be an emanation from Loke, the evil principle; and Hela, or hell or death, in a poetical vein of allegory not unworthy of our own Milton, is celebrated as the daughter of that personage, and as the sister of the dragon. Indignant at the pertinacious rebellion of the evil principle, the universal Father despatched certain of the gods to bring those children to him. When they were come, he threw the serpent down to the bottom of the ocean. But there the monster grew so large, that he wound himself round the whole globe of the earth. Death, meanwhile, was precipitated into hell, where she possesses vast

apartments, strongly built, and fenced with gates of iron. Her hall is Grief; her table, Famine; Hunger, her knife; Delay, her servant; Faintness, her porch; Sickness and Pain, her bed; and her tent, Cursing and Howling."

THE FLOOD OF NOAH.

JOSEPHUS, in his first book against Apion, states, that Berosus, the Chaldean historian, relates, in a similar manner to Moses, the history of the flood, and the preservation of Noah in an ark or chest. In Abydemis's History of Assyria, in passages quoted by Eusebius, mention is made of an ancient Prince of the name of Sisithrus, who was forewarned by Saturn of a deluge. In this account, the ship, the sending forth and returning of the birds, the abating of the waters, and the resting of the ship on a mountain, are all mentioned. (EUSEB. *Præp. Evang.*, lib. 9, c. 12. GROTIUS *On the Christian Religion*, lib. 1, sec. 16.) Lucian, in his book concerning the goddess of Syria, mentions the Syrian traditions as to this event. Here Noah is called Deucalion; and that he was the person intended under this name is rendered indubitable by the mention of the wickedness of the antediluvians, the piety of Deucalion, the ark, and the bringing into it of the beasts of the earth by pairs. The ancient Persian traditions, as Dr. Hyde has shown, though mixed with fable, have a substantial agreement with the Mosaic account. In Hindostan, the ancient poem of Bhagavat treats of a flood which destroyed all mankind, except a pious Prince with seven of his attendants and their wives. The Chinese writers, in like manner, make mention of a universal flood. In the legends of the ancient Egyptians, Goths, and Druids, striking references are made to the same event; (Edda, Fab. 4; DAVIES'S *Mythology of the British Druids*, p. 226;) and it was found represented in the historical paintings of the Mexicans, and among the American nations. The natives of Otaheite believed that the world was torn in pieces formerly by the anger of their gods; the inhabitants of the Sandwich Islands have a tradition, that the Etooa who created the world, afterwards destroyed it by an inundation; and recollections of the same event are preserved among the New-Zealanders, as the author had the opportunity of ascertaining lately in a conversation with two of their Chiefs, through an interpreter. For large illustrations on this point, see Bryant's *Heathen Mythology*, and Faber's *Horæ Mosaicæ*.

SACRIFICE.

THE great principle of the three dispensations of religion in the Scriptures,—the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian,—that without shedding of blood there is no remission, has fixed itself in

every pagan religion of ancient and modern times. For though the followers of Budhu are forbidden to offer sanguinary sacrifices to him, they offer them to demons in order to avert various evils; and their presentation of flowers and fruits to Budhu himself shows, that one part of the original rite of sacrifice has been retained, though the other, through a philosophical refinement, is given up. Sacrifices are, however, offered in China, where the most ancient form of Budhuism generally prevails; a presumption that the Budhuism of Ceylon and some parts of India is a refinement upon a more ancient system. "That the practice of devoting piacular victims has, at one period or another, prevailed in every quarter of the globe; and that it has been alike adopted by the most barbarous and by the most civilized nations, can scarcely be said to need regular and formal proof."

EXPECTATION OF A DELIVERER.

AMIDST the miseries of succeeding ages, the ancient pagan world was always looking forward to the appearance of a great Deliverer and Restorer; and this expectation was so general, that it is impossible to account for it but from "the promises made unto the fathers," beginning with the promise of conquest to the Seed of the woman over the power of the serpent. It is a singular fact, and still worthy of remark, though so often stated, that, a little before our Lord's advent, an expectation of the speedy appearance of this Deliverer was general among the nations of antiquity: "The fact," says Bishop Horsley, "is so notorious to all who have any knowledge of antiquity, that if any one would deny it, I would decline all dispute with such an adversary, as too ignorant to receive conviction, or too disingenuous to acknowledge what he must secretly admit." It is another singular fact, that Virgil, in his *Pollio*, by an application of the Sibylline verses (which are almost literally in the high and glowing strains in which Isaiah prophesies of Christ) to a child of his friend, one of the Roman Consuls, whose birth was just expected, should, in this manner, out of an extravagant flattery, call the attention of the world to those singular and mysterious books, so shortly before the birth of Him who alone could fulfil the prophecies they contain. For a further account of the Sibylline verses the reader is referred to *Prideaux's Connection*; to *Bishop Lowth's Dissertations*; and to *Bishop Horsley's Dissertation on the Prophecies of the Messiah dispersed among the Heathen*. It is enough here to say, that it is an historical fact, that the Sibylline books existed among the Romans from an early period; that these oracles of the Cumæan Sibyl were held in such veneration, that the book which contained them was deposited in a stone chest in the temple of Jupiter, in the

Capitol, and committed to the care of two persons appointed to that office expressly ; that, about a century before our Saviour's birth, the book was destroyed in the fire which consumed the temple in which it was deposited ; that the Roman Senate knew that similar oracles existed among other nations, for, to repair that loss, they sent persons to make a new collection of these oracles in different parts of Asia, in the islands of the Archipelago, in Africa, and in Sicily, who returned with about a thousand verses, which were deposited in the place of the originals, and kept with the same care ; and that the predictions which Virgil weaves into his fourth Eclogue—of the appearance of a King whose monarchy was to be universal, and who was to bestow upon mankind the blessings he describes—were contained in them. It follows, therefore, that such predictions existed anciently among the Romans ; that they were found in many other parts of Europe, and Asia, and Africa ; and that they had so marvelous an agreement with the predictions of the Jewish Prophets, that either they were, in part, copies from them, or predictions of an inspiration equally sacred,—the fragments of very ancient prophecy interwoven, probably, with the fables of later times. “ If,” as Bishop Horsley justly observes, “ any illiterate persons were to hear Virgil's poem read, with the omission of a few allusions to the heathen mythology, which would not affect the general sense of it, he would, without hesitation, pronounce it to be a prophecy of the Messiah.” It might seem, indeed, that the poet had only, in many passages, translated Isaiah, did he not expressly attribute the predictions he has introduced into his poem to the Cumæan Sibyl ; which he would not have done if such passages had not been found in the oracles, because they were then in existence, and their contents were known to many. The subsequent forgeries of these oracles in the first ages of the church, also, prove, at least, this, that the true Sibylline verses contained prophetic passages capable of a strong application to the true universal Deliverer, which those pious frauds aimed at making more particular and more convincing. Those who do not read Latin may consult “ the Messiah ” of Pope, with the principal passages from Virgil in the notes, translated and collated with prophecies from Isaiah ; which will put them in possession of the substance of this singular and most interesting production.

Nor is it only on the above points that we perceive the ancient traditions and opinions preserved, in their grand outline, among different heathen nations, but also in the scriptural doctrine of the destruction of the present system of material nature. The Pythagoreans, Platonists, Epicureans, Stoics, all had notions of a general conflagration. After the doctrine of the Stoics Ovid thus speaks, *Metam.*, lib. 1 :—

*Esse quoque in fati reminiscitur affore tempus
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regio cæli
Ardeat, et mundi moles operosa labore.*

“Rememb’ring in the fates a time when fire
Should to the battlements of heaven aspire,
When all his blazing worlds above should burn,
And all the’ inferior globe to cinders turn.” DRYDEN.

Seneca, speaking of the same event, (*ad Murciam*, c. ult.,) says, *Tempus adveniret quo sidera sideribus incurrent*, &c.: “The time will come when the whole world will be consumed, that it may be again renewed; when the powers of nature will be turned against herself; when stars will rush on stars; and the whole material world, which now appears so resplendent with beauty and harmony, will be destroyed in one general conflagration. In this grand catastrophe of nature, all animated beings, (excepting the universal intelligence,) men, heroes, demons, and gods, shall perish together.”

The same tradition presents itself, in different forms, in all leading systems of modern Paganism.

NOTE B.—PAGE 43.

Of the controversy as to Zoroaster, Zeratusht, or Zertushta, and the sacred books said to have been written by him called Zend, or Zendavesta, which has divided critics so eminent, it would answer no important end to give an abstract. Those who wish for information on the subject are referred to Hyde’s *Religio Veterum Persarum*; Prideaux’s *Connection*; Warburton’s *Divine Legation*; Bryant’s *Mythology*; the *Universal History*; Sir W. Jones’s *Works*, vol. iii., p. 115; M. Du Perron; and Richardson’s *Dissertation*, prefixed to his *Persian and Arabic Dictionary*. But whatever may become of the authority of the whole or part of the Zendavesta, and with whatever fables the history of the reformer of the Magian religion may be mixed, the learned are generally agreed that such a reformation took place by his instrumentality. “Zeratusht,” says Sir W. Jones, “reformed the old religion by the addition of genii, or angels; of new ceremonies in the veneration shown to fire; of a new work which he pretended to have received from heaven; and, above all, by establishing the actual adoration of the supreme Being;” and he further adds: “The reformed religion of Persia continued in force till that country was conquered by the Musselmans; and without studying the Zend we have ample information concerning it in the modern Persian writings of several who profess it. Bahman always named Zeratusht with reverence; he was, in truth, a pure Theist, and

strongly disclaimed any adoration of the fire or other elements ; and he denied that the doctrine of two co-eval principles, supremely good and supremely bad, formed any part of his faith." "The Zeratusht of Persia, or the Zoroaster of the Greeks," says Richardson, "was highly celebrated by the most discerning people of ancient times ; and his tenets, we are told, were most eagerly and rapidly embraced by the highest in rank, and the wisest men in the Persian empire."—(Dissertation, prefixed to his Persian Dictionary.) He distinguished himself by denying that good and evil—represented by light and darkness—were co-eval, independent principles ; and asserted the supremacy of the true God, in exact conformity with the doctrine contained in a part of that celebrated prophecy of Isaiah in which Cyrus is mentioned by name : "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me ;" (no co-eval power ;) "I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace," (or good,) "and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things." Fire, by Zerdushta, appears to have been used emblematically only ; and the ceremonies for preserving and transmitting it, introduced by him, were manifestly taken from the Jews, and the sacred fire of their tabernacle and temple.

The old religion of the Persians was corrupted by Sabianism, or the worship of the host of heaven, with its accompanying superstition. The Magian doctrine, whatever it might be at first, had degenerated ; and two eternal principles, good and evil, had been introduced ; it was, therefore, necessarily idolatrous also, and, like all other false systems, flattering to the vicious habits of the people. So great an improvement in the moral character and influence of the religion of a whole nation as was effected by Zoroaster, a change which is not certainly paralleled in the history of the religion of mankind, can scarcely, therefore, be thought possible, except we suppose a divine interposition, either directly, or by the occurrence of some very impressive events. Now, as there are so many authorities for fixing the time of Zoroaster, or Zeratusht, not many years subsequent to the death of the great Cyrus, the events to which we have referred in the text are those, and, indeed, the only ones, which will account for his success in that reformation of religion of which he was the author ; for had not the minds of men been prepared for this change by something extraordinary, it is not supposable that they would have adopted a purer faith from him. That he gave them a better doctrine, is clear from the admissions of even Dean Prideaux, who has very unjustly branded him as an impostor. Let it, then, be remembered, that as "the Most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men," he often overrules great political events for moral purposes. The Jews were sent into captivity to Babylon to be reformed from their idolatry.

trous propensities, and their reformation commenced with their calamity. A miracle was there wrought in favour of the three Hebrew confessors of one only God; and that under circumstances to put shame upon a popular idol, in the presence of the King and "all the Rulers of the provinces," that the issue of this controversy between Jehovah and idolatry might be made known throughout that vast empire. Worship was refused to the idol by a few Hebrew captives, and the idol had no power to punish the public affront. The servants of Jehovah were cast into a furnace, and he delivered them unhurt; and a royal decree declared "that there was no God who could deliver after this sort." The proud Monarch himself is smitten with a singular disease; he remains subject to it until he acknowledges the true God; and, upon his recovery, he publicly ascribes to him both the justice and the mercy of the punishment. This event takes place, also, in the accomplishment of a dream, which none of the wise men of Babylon could interpret: It was interpreted by Daniel, who made the fulfilment to redound to the honour of the true God, by ascribing to him the perfection of knowing the future, which none of the false gods appealed to by the Chaldean sages possessed; as the inability of their servants to interpret the dream sufficiently proved. After these singular events Cyrus takes Babylon; and he finds there the sage and the statesman, Daniel, the worshipper of the God "who creates both good and evil, who makes the light and forms the darkness." There is moral certainty that he and the principal Persians throughout the empire would have the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus—delivered more than a hundred years before he was born, and in which his name stood recorded, along with the predicted circumstances of the caption of Babylon—pointed out to them; as every reason, religious and political, urged the Jews to make the prediction a matter of notoriety; and, from Cyrus's decree in Ezra, it is certain that he was acquainted with it, because there is, in the decree, an obvious reference to the prophecy. This prophecy, so strangely fulfilled, would give mighty force to the doctrine connected with it, and which it proclaims with so much majesty:—

"I am Jehovah, and none else,
Forming light and creating darkness,
Making peace and creating evil;
I Jehovah am the author of all these things."

LOWTH'S *Translation*.

Here the great principle of corrupted Magianism was directly attacked; and, in proportion as the fulfilment of the prophecy was felt to be singular and striking, the doctrine blended with it would attract notice. Its force was both felt and acknowledged, as we have seen in the decree of Cyrus for the rebuilding of the temple. In that,

Cyrus acknowledged the true God to be supreme, and thus renounced his former faith ; and the example, the public example, of a Prince so beloved, and whose reign was so extended, could not fail to influence the religious opinions of his people. That the effect did not terminate in Cyrus, we know ; for, from the book of Ezra, it appears that both Darius and Artaxerxes made decrees in favour of the Jews, in which Jehovah has the emphatic appellation repeatedly given to him, " the God of heaven ; " the very terms used by Cyrus himself. Nor are we to suppose the impression confined to the court ; for the history of the three Hebrew youths ; of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, sickness, and reformation from idolatry ; of the interpretation of the hand-writing on the wall by Daniel, the servant of the living God ; of his deliverance from the lions ; and the publicity of the prophecy of Isaiah respecting Cyrus, were too recent, too public, and too striking in their nature, not to be often and largely talked of. Besides, in the prophecy respecting Cyrus, the intention of Almighty God in recording the name of that Monarch in an inspired book, and showing beforehand that he had chosen him to overturn the Babylonian empire, is expressly mentioned as having respect to two great objects : First, the deliverance of Israel ; and, second, the making known his supreme divinity among the nations of the earth. I again quote Lowth's Translation :—

" For the sake of my servant Jacob
And of Israel my chosen,
I have even called thee by thy name,
I have surnamed thee, though thou knewest me not.
I am Jehovah, and none else,
Beside me there is no God ;
I will gird thee, though thou hast not known me,
That they may know, from the rising of the sun,
And from the west, that there is none beside me," &c.

It was, therefore, intended, by this proceeding, on the part of Providence, to teach not only Cyrus, but the people of his vast empire and surrounding nations, first, that he was Jehovah, the self-subsistent, the eternal God ; second, that he was God alone, there being no Deity beside himself ; and, third, that good and evil, represented by light and darkness, were neither independent nor eternal subsistences, but his great instruments, and under his control.

The Persians who had so vastly extended their empire by the conquest of the countries formerly held by the Monarchs of Babylon, were thus prepared for such a reformation of their religion as Zoroaster effected. The principles he advocated had been previously adopted by several of the Persian Monarchs, and probably by many of the principal persons of that nation. Zoroaster himself thus became acquainted with the great truths contained in this famous prophecy ; which attacked the very foundations of every idolatrous

and Manichean system. From the other sacred books of the Jews, who mixed with the Persians in every part of the empire, he evidently learned more : This is sufficiently proved from the many points of similarity between his religion and Judaism, though he should not be allowed to speak so much in the style of the holy Scriptures as some passages in the Zendavesta would indicate. He found the people, however, "prepared of the Lord" to admit his reformatations ; and he carried them. I cannot but look upon this as one instance of several merciful dispensations of God to the Gentile world, through his own peculiar people the Jews, by which the idolatries of the Heathen were often checked, and the light of truth rekindled among them. In this view the ancient Jews evidently considered the Jewish Church as appointed not to preserve only, but to extend, true religion : "God be merciful to us, and bless us ; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health unto all nations." This renders pagan nations more evidently without excuse. That this dispensation of mercy was afterwards neglected among the Persians, is certain. How long the effect continued, we know not, nor how widely it spread ; perhaps longer and wider than may now distinctly appear. If the Magi who came from the east to seek Christ were Persians, some true worshippers of God would appear to have remained in Persia to that day ; and if, as is probable, the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel were retained among them, they might be among those who "waited for redemption," not at Jerusalem, but in a distant part of the world. The Parsees, who were nearly extirpated by Mahometan fanaticism, were charged, by their oppressors, with the idolatry of fire ; and this was probably true of the multitude. Some of their writers, however, warmly defended themselves against the charge. A considerable number of them remain in India to this day, and profess to have the books of Zoroaster.

This note contains a considerable digression ; but its connexion with the argument in the text is obvious. He who rejects the authority of the Scriptures will not be influenced by what has been said of the prophecies of Isaiah, or the events of the life of Daniel ; but still it is not to be denied that, whilst the Persian empire remained, a Persian moral philosopher, who taught sublime doctrines, flourished, and that his opinions had great influence. The connexion of the Jews and Persians is an undeniable matter of historic fact. The tenets ascribed to Zoroaster bear the marks of Jewish origin, because they are mingled with some of the peculiar rites and circumstances of the Jewish temple. From this source the theology of the Persians received improvements, in correct and influential notions of Deity especially ; and was enriched with the history and doctrines of the Mosaic records. The affairs of the Greeks were so interwoven

with those of the Persians, that the sages of Greece could not be ignorant of the opinions of Zertushta, known to them by the name of Zoroaster; and from this school some of their best notions were derived.

NOTE C.—PAGE 46.

THE greatest corruptions of religion are to be traced to superstition, and to that vain and bewildering habit of philosophizing which obtained among the ancients. Superstition was the besetting sin of the ignorant; vain speculation, of the intelligent. Both sprung from the vicious state of the heart: The expression was different, but the effect the same. The evil probably arose in Egypt, and was largely improved upon by the philosophers of Greece and India. Systems, hypotheses, cosmogonies, &c., are all the work of philosophy; and the most subtle and bewildering errors, such as the eternity of matter, the metempsychosis, the absorption of the human soul at death, &c., have sprung from them. Ancient wisdom, both religious and moral, was contained in great principles, expressed in maxims, without affectation of systematic relation and arrangement, and without any deep research into reasons and causes. The moment philosophy attempted this, the weakness and waywardness of the human mind began to display themselves. Theories sprung up in succession; and confusion and contradiction at length produced scepticism in all, and in many matured it into total unbelief. The speculative habit affected at once the opinions of ancient Africa and Asia; and, in India, the philosophy of Egypt and Greece remains to this day, ripened into its full bearing of deleterious fruit.

The similarity of the Greek and modern Asiatic systems is indeed a very curious subject; for in the latter is exhibited, at this day, the philosophy of Paganism, whilst in other places false religion is seen only or chiefly in its simple form of superstition. The coincidence of the Hindoo and Greek mythology has been traced by Sir W. Jones; and his opinions on this subject are strongly confirmed by the still more striking coincidence in the doctrines of the Hindoo and Grecian philosophical sects. "The period," says Mr. Ward, (*View of the History of the Hindoos, &c.*), "when the most eminent of the Hindoo philosophers flourished, is still involved in much obscurity; but the apparent agreement, in many striking particulars, between the Hindoo and the Greek systems of philosophy, not only suggests the idea of some union in their origin, but strongly pleads for their belonging to one age, notwithstanding the unfathomable antiquity claimed by the Hindoos; and after the reader shall have compared the two systems, the author is persuaded he will not con-

sider the conjecture as improbable, that Pythagoras and others did really visit India, or that Goutumu and Pythagoras were contemporaries, or nearly so."—Vol. iv.

"Many of the subjects discussed among the Hindoos were the very subjects which excited the disputes in the Greek academies; such as the eternity of matter, the first cause, God the soul of the world, the doctrine of atoms, creation, the nature of the gods, the doctrines of fate, transmigration, successive revolutions of worlds, absorption into the divine Being," &c.—*Ibid.*, page 115.

Mr. Ward enters at large into this coincidence in his *Introductory Remarks* to his fourth volume, to which the reader is referred. It shall only be observed, that those speculations and subtle arguments just mentioned, both in the Greek and Asiatic branches of pagan philosophy, gave birth to absolute Atheism. Several of the Greek philosophic sects, as is well known, were professedly atheistic. Cudworth enumerates four forms assumed by this species of unbelief. The same principles which distinguished their sects may be traced in several of those of the Hindoos, and above all the atheistical system of Budhoo branched off from the vain philosophy of the Brachminical schools, and has extended farther than Hindooism itself. The reason of all this is truly given by Bishop Warburton, as to the Greeks; and it is equally applicable to the Asiatic philosophy of the present day, which is so clearly one and the same, and also to many errors which have crept into the church of Christ itself. "The philosophy of the Greeks," he observes, led to unbelief, "because it was above measure refined and speculative, and used to be determined by metaphysical rather than by moral principles, and to stick to all consequences, how absurd soever, that were seen to arise from such principles."

CHAPTER VI.

The Necessity of Revelation :—State of religious Knowledge among the Heathen.

SEVERAL presumptive arguments have been offered in favour of the opinion, that Almighty God in his goodness has made an express revelation of his will to mankind. They have been drawn from the fact, that we are moral agents, and, therefore, under a law or rule of conduct,—from the consideration that no law can be binding till made known, or at least rendered cognizable by those whom it is intended to govern,—from the inability of the generality of men to collect any adequate information on moral and religious subjects by processes of induction;—from the insufficiency of reason, even in the wisest, to make any satisfactory discovery of the first principles of religion and duty,—from the want of all authority and influence in such discoveries, upon the majority of mankind, had a few minds of superior order, and with more favourable opportunities, been capable of making them,—from the fact that no such discovery was ever made by the wisest of the ancient sages, inasmuch as the truths they held were in existence before their day, even in the earliest periods of the patriarchal ages,—and from the fact, that whatever truths they collected from early tradition, or from the descendants of Abraham, mediately or immediately, they so corrupted under the pretence of improving them,* as to destroy their harmony and moral influence, thereby greatly weakening the probability that moral truth was ever an object of the steady and sincere pursuit of men. To these presumptions in favour

* Plato, in his *Epinomis*, acknowledges that the Greeks learned many things from the barbarians; though he asserts, that they improved what they thus borrowed, and made it better, especially in what related to the worship of the gods.—*PLAT. Oper.*, p. 703. *Edit. Ficin. Lugd.* 1590.

of an express revelation, written, preserved with care, and appointed to be preached and published under the authority of its author for the benefit of all, wise or unwise, we may add the powerful presumption which is afforded by the necessity of the case. This necessity of a revelation is to be collected, not only from what has been advanced, but from the state of moral and religious knowledge and practice, in those countries where the records which profess to contain the Mosaic and the Christian revelations have been or are still unknown.

The necessity of immediate divine instruction was acknowledged by many of the wisest and most inquiring of the Heathen, under the conviction of the entire inability of man, unassisted by God, to discover truth with certainty,—so greatly had the primitive traditional revelations been obscured by errors before the times of the most ancient of those sages among the Heathen whose writings have, in whole or in part, been transmitted to us, and so little confidence had they in themselves to separate truth from error, or to say, “This is true, and that false.” And as the necessity of an express and authenticated revelation was acknowledged, so it was publicly exhibited, because on the very first principles of religion and morals there was either entire ignorance, or no settled and consonant opinions, even among the wisest of mankind themselves.*

* Plato, beginning his discourse of the gods and the generation of the world, cautions his disciples “not to expect any thing beyond a likely conjecture concerning these things.” Cicero, referring to the same subject, says, *Latent ista omnia crassis occulta et circumfusa tenebris*, “All these things are involved in deep obscurity.”

The following passage from the same author may be recommended to the consideration of modern exalters of the power of unassisted reason. The treasures of the philosophy of past ages were poured at his feet; and he had studied every branch of human wisdom, with astonishing industry and acuteness; yet he observes, *Quod si tales nos natura genuisset, ut eam ipsam intueri, et perspicere, eâdemque optimâ duce cursum vitæ conficere possemus; haud erat sanè quod quisquam rationem ac doctrinam requireret. Nunc parvulos nobis dedit igniculos, quos celeriter malis moribus opinionibusque depravati sic restinguimus, ut nusquam naturæ lumen appareat.* “If we had come into the world in such circumstances, as that we could clearly and distinctly have discerned nature herself, and have been able in the course of our lives to follow her true and uncorrupted directions, this alone might have been sufficient, and there would have been little need of teaching and instruction; but now nature has

Some proofs of this have already been adduced ; but the importance of the subject requires that they should be enlarged.

Though the belief of one supreme Being has been found in many parts of the world, yet the notion of subordinate deities, the immediate dispensers of good and evil to men, and the objects of their fear and worship, has almost equally obtained ; and this of necessity destroyed or greatly counteracted the moral influence of that just opinion.

“ The people generally among the Gentiles,” says Dr. Tenison, “ did rise little higher than the objects of sense. They worshipped them each as supreme in their kind, or no otherwise unequal than the sun, and the moon, or the other celestial bodies, by the adoration of which the ancient idolaters, as Job intimateth, denied (or excluded) the God that is above. Porphyry himself, one of the most plausible apologists for the religion of the Gentiles, doth own in some the most gross and blockish idolatry of mean objects. He tells us that it is not a matter of which we should be amazed, if most ignorant men esteemed wood and stones divine statues ; seeing they who are unlearned look upon monuments which have inscriptions upon them as ordinary stones, and regard books as so many bundles of paper.” *

The modern idolatry of Hindostan, which in principle differs nothing from that of the ancient world, affords a striking comment upon this point ; and, indeed, is of great import-

given us only some small sparks of right reason, which we so quickly extinguish with corrupt opinions and evil practices, that the true light of nature no where appears.”—*Tusc. Quæst.* 3.

The same author, (*Tusc. Quæst.* 1,) having reckoned up the opinions of philosophers as to the soul's immortality, concludes thus, *Harum sententiarum quæ vera est Deus aliquis videret, quæ verisimillima est magna quæstio est.* “ Which of these opinions is true, some god must tell us ; which is most like truth, is a great question.” Jamblicus, speaking of the principles of divine worship, saith, “ It is manifest that those things are to be done which are pleasing to God ; but what they are, it is not easy to know, except a man were taught them by God himself, or by some person who had received them from God, or obtained the knowledge of them by some divine means.”—*JAMB. in Vit. Pythag.*, c. 28.

* Discourse on Idolatry, p. 50.

ance in enabling us to conceive justly of the true character and practical effects of idolatry in all ages. One supreme Being is acknowledged by the Hindoos ; but they never worship him, nor think that he concerns himself with human affairs at all.

“ The Hindoos believe in one God, so completely abstracted in his own essence, however, that in this state he is emphatically ‘ the unknown,’ and is, consequently, neither the object of hope, nor of fear ; he is even destitute of intelligence, and remains in a state of profound repose.”*

“ This being,” says Moore,† “ is called ‘ Brahm,’ one eternal mind, the self-existing, incomprehensible Spirit. To him, however, the Hindoos erect no altars. The objects of their adoration commence with the triad,—Brahma, Vishnu, and Seva, which represent the almighty powers of creation, preservation, and destruction.”

The learned among the classic Heathen, it is true, occasionally speak nobly concerning God and his attributes ; but at the same time they were led by their own imaginations and reasonings to conclusions which neutralize the effect of their sublimer conceptions, and often contradict them. The eternity of matter, for instance, was held by the Greek and Roman philosophers, and by their preceptors in the oriental schools, who thought it absolutely impossible that any thing should be produced from nothing ; thus destroying the notion of creation, in its proper sense, and of a supreme Creator. This opinion, as Bishop Stillingfleet shows,‡ is contrary to the omnipotence and independence of God, and is a great abatement of those correct views which the words of the ancient philosophers would seem sometimes to express.§

* Ward’s Hindoo Mythology, vol. ii., p. 306.

† Hindoo Pantheon, p. 132.

‡ *Origines Sacræ*, lib. 3, c. 2.

§ When we meet with passages in the writings of Heathens which recommend moral virtues, and speak in a fit and becoming manner of God, we are apt, from our more elevated knowledge of these subjects, to attach more correct and precise ideas to the terms used, than the original writers themselves, and to give them credit for better views than they entertained. It is one proof, that though some of them speak, for instance, of God seeing and know-

It had another injurious effect, it destroyed the interesting doctrine of divine government as to those natural evils to which men are subject. These they traced to the unchangeable and eternal nature of matter, which even the supreme God could not control. Thus Seneca says,* that “evil things happen to good men, *quia non potest Artifex mutare materiam*, ‘because God, the Artificer, could not change matter;’ and that *a magno Artifice multa formantur prava*, ‘many things were made ill by the great Artificer;’ not that he wanted art, but through the stubbornness of matter;” in which they generally agree. This opinion of theirs was brought from the oriental schools, where it had been long received; nor was it confined to Egypt and Chaldea. It was one of the dogmas which Confucius taught in China, in the fifth century before Christ, that, out of nothing, that which is cannot be produced; and that material bodies must have existed from all eternity. From this notion it follows, that there is no calamity to which we are not liable; and that God himself is unable to protect us from it: Prayer is useless, and trust in him is absurd. The noble doctrine of the infliction of misery by a wise and gracious Being, for our correction and improvement, so often dwelt upon in Scripture, could have no place in a system which admitted this tenet,—God could neither be a refuge in trouble, nor a Father correcting us for our profit, that we might be

ing all things, they did not conceive of the omniscience of God in the manner in which that attribute is explained by those who have learned what God is from his own words; that some of the pagan philosophers who lived after the Christian era, complain that the Christians had introduced a very troublesome and busy God, who did *in omnium mores, actus, omnium verba denique, et occultas cogitationes diligenter inquirere*, “diligently inquire into the manners, actions, words, and secret thoughts, of all men.” Cicero too denies the foreknowledge of God, and for the same reason which has been urged against it in modern times by some who, for the time at least, have closed their eyes upon the testimony of the Scriptures on this point, and been willing, in order to serve a favourite theory, to go back to the obscurity of Paganism. The difficulty with him is, that prescience is inconsistent with contingency. *Mihi ne in Deum cadere videatur ut sciat quid casu et fortuito futurum sit; si enim scit, certè illud eveniet; si certè eveniet, nulla fortuna est; est autem fortuna, rerum ergò fortuitarum nulla præsensio est.*—*De Fato*, n. 12, 13.

* *De Provid.*, cap. 5.

“partakers of his holiness.” What they knew of God was, therefore, by such speculations, rendered entirely unprofitable.

But a worse consequence resulted from this opinion : By some of them the necessary obliquity and perverseness of matter was regarded not only as the source of natural, but also of moral, evil ; by which they either made sin necessary and irresistible, or found in this opinion much to palliate it.

Others refer moral evil to a natural principle of evil, an evil god “emulous of the good God ;” which, Plutarch says,* is a tradition of great antiquity, derived “from the divines, *ἐκ θεολόγων*, and lawgivers, to the poets and philosophers ; whose first author cannot be found.” But whether natural and moral evil be traced to an eternal and uncontrollable matter, or to an eternal and independent anti-god, it is clear that the notion of a supreme Deity, as contained in the Scriptures, and as conceived of by modern Theists who have borrowed their light from them, could have no existence in such systems ; and that, by making moral evil necessary, men were taught to consider it as a misfortune rather than a crime ; and were thus, in fact, encouraged to commit it, by regarding it as unavoidable.

In like manner, though occasionally we find many excellent things said of the providence of God, all these were weakened or destroyed by other opinions. The Epicurean sect denied the doctrine, and laid it down as a maxim, that “what was blessed and immortal gave neither any trouble to itself nor to others ;” a notion which exactly agrees with the system of the modern Hindoos. “According to the doctrine of Aristotle, God resides in the celestial sphere, and observes nothing, and cares for nothing, beyond himself. Residing in the first sphere, he possesses neither immensity nor omnipresence ; far removed from the inferior parts of the universe, he is not even a spectator of what is passing among its inhabitants.”† The

* *De Isid. et Osir.*—Dr. Cudworth thinks that Plutarch has indulged in an overstrained assertion ; but the confidence with which the philosopher speaks is, at least, a proof of the great extent of this opinion.

† *Enfield's History of Philosophy*, lib. 2, cap. 9.

Stoics contended for a providence ; but, in their creed, it was counteracted by the doctrine of an absolute necessity, or fate ; to which God and matter, or the universe,—which consists, as they thought, of both,—was immutably subject ; and where they allow it, they confine the care of the gods to great affairs only.

The Platonists and the followers of Pythagoras believed that all things happened *κατα θεϊαν προνοίαν*, “according to divine providence ;” but this they overthrew, by joining fortune with God : “God, fortune, and opportunity,” says Plato, “govern all the affairs of men.” *

To them, also, there were “lords many and gods many ;” and wherever polytheism is admitted, it is as destructive of the doctrine of providence as fate is, though by a different process. The Fatalist makes all things fixed and certain, and thus excludes government ; the Polytheist gives up the government of the world to innumerable opposing and contrary wills, and thus makes every thing uncertain. If the favour of one deity be propitiated, the wrath of another, equally or more powerful, may be provoked ; or the gods may quarrel among themselves. Such is the only providence which can be discovered in the *Iliad* of Homer, and the *Æneid* of Virgil ; poems which, unquestionably, embody the popular belief of the times in which they were written. The same confused and contradictory management of the affairs of men we see in all modern idolatrous systems, only that, with length of duration, they appear to have become more oppressive and distracting. Where so many deities are essentially malignant and cruel to men ; where demons are supposed to have power to afflict and to destroy at pleasure ; and where aspects of the stars, and the screams of birds, and other ominous circumstances are thought to have an irresistible influence upon the fortunes of life, and the occurrences of every day ; and especially where, to crown the whole, there is an utter ignorance of one supreme controlling Infinite Mind, or his existence is denied ; or he who is capable of exercising such a superin-

* *De Leg.* lib. 4.

tendence as might render him the object of hope, is supposed to be totally unconcerned with human affairs ; there can be no ground of firm trust, no settled hope, no permanent consolation ; timidity and gloom tenant every bosom, and, in many instances, render life a burden.*

Another great principle of religion is the doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments ; and though, in some form, it is recognised in pagan systems, and the traditions of the primitive ages may be traced in their extravagant perversions and fables, its evidence was either greatly diminished, or it was mixed up with notions entirely subversive of the moral effect which it was originally intended to produce.

Of the ancient Chaldean philosophy not much is known. In its best state it contained many of the principles of the patriarchal religion ; but at length, as we find from Scripture, it degenerated into the doctrine of judicial astrology, which is so nearly allied to fatalism, as to subvert the idea of the present life being a state of probation, and the future a state of just and gracious rewards and punishments.

Ancient writers differ as to the opinions of the learned of Egypt on the human soul. Diodorus Siculus says they believed its immortality, and the future existence of the just among the gods. Herodotus ascribes to them the doctrine of transmigration. Both may be reconciled. The former doctrine was the most ancient ; the latter was induced by that progress of error which we observe among all nations. Another

* The testimony of Missionaries, who see the actual effects of Paganism in the different countries where they labour, is particularly valuable. On the point mentioned in the text, the Wesleyan Missionaries thus speak of the state of the Cingalese : " We feel ourselves incapable of giving you a full view of the deplorable state of a people who believe that all things are governed by chance ; who find malignant gods or devils in every planet, whose influence over mankind they consider to be exceeding great, and the agents who inflict all the evil that men suffer in the world. A people so circumstanced need no addition to their miseries, but are objects towards which Christian pity will extend itself, as far as the voice of their case can reach. They are, literally, through fear of death or malignant demons, all their life-time subject to bondage."

subtle notion grew up with it, which infected the philosophy of Greece, and, spreading throughout Asia, has done more to destroy the moral effect of a belief in the future existence of man, than any other: This was, “that God is the soul of the world,” from which all human spirits came, and to which they will return; some immediately, and others through long courses of transmigration. The doctrine of ancient revelation, of which this was a subtle and fatal perversion, is obvious. The Scripture account is, that the human soul was from God by creation; the refinement of Pagan philosophy,—that it is from him by emanation, or separation of essence, and still remains a separate portion of God, seeking its return to him. With respect to the future, revelation always taught that the souls of the just return to God at death, not to lose their individuality, but to be united to him in holy and delightful communion; the philosophic perversion was, that the parts so separated from God, and connected for a time with matter, would be re-united to the great source by refusion, as a drop of water to the ocean.*/ Thus philosophy refined upon the doctrine of immortality, until it converted it into annihilation itself; for so it is, in the most absolute sense, as to distinct consciousness and personality. The prevalence of this notion, under different modifications, is, indeed, very remarkable.

Bishop Warburton proves, that this opinion was held, not merely by the atheistical and sceptical sects among the Greeks, but by what he calls the philosophic quaternion of dogmatic Theists, the four renowned schools, the Pythagoric, the Platonic, the Peripatetic, and the Stoic; and on this ground argues, that though they taught the doctrine of future rewards and punishments to the populace, as a means of securing their obedience to the laws, they themselves did not believe what

* *Interim tamen vix ulli fuisse, (quæ humanæ mentis caligo, atque imbecillitas est,) qui non inciderint in errorem illum de refusione in Animam mundi. Nimirum, sicut existimârunt singulorum animas particulis esse animæ mundanæ quarum quælibet suo corpore, ut aqua vase, effluere, ac animæ mundi, e quâ deducta fuerit, iterum uniri.*—GASSENDI *Animadv.*, in lib. 10, *Diog. Laertii*, p. 550.

they propagated ; and in this he was doubtless correct. With future reward and punishment, in the proper and commonly received sense in all ages, this notion was entirely incompatible. He observes, “ And that the reader may not suspect these kind of phrases, that the ‘ soul is part of God,’ ‘ discerpted from him,’ ‘ of his nature,’ which perpetually occur in the writings of the ancients, to be only highly figurate expressions, and not to be measured by the severe standard of metaphysical propriety, he is desired to take notice of one consequence drawn from this principle, and universally held by antiquity, which was this, that the soul was eternal *à parte ante* as well as *à parte post*, which the Latins well express by the word *sempiternus*. But when the ancients are said to hold the pre- and post-existence of the soul, and therefore to attribute a proper eternity to it, we must not suppose that they understood it to be eternal in its distinct and peculiar existence ; but that it was discerpted from the substance of God in time, and would in time be rejoined and resolved into it again ; which they explained by a bottle’s being filled with sea-water, that swimming there awhile, on the bottle’s breaking, flowed in again, and mingled with the common mass. They only differed about the time of this re-union and resolution ; the greater part holding it to be at death ; but the Pythagoreans, not till after many transmigrations. The Platonists went between these two opinions, and rejoined pure and unpolluted souls, immediately on death, to the universal Spirit. But those that had contracted much defilement were sent into a succession of other bodies, to purge and purify them before they returned to their parent substance.”

Some learned men have denied the consequence which Warburton wished to establish from these premises, and consider the resorption of these sages as figurative, and consequently compatible with distinct consciousness and individuality. The researches, however, since that time made into the corresponding philosophy of the Hindoos, bear this acute and learned man out to the full length of his conclusion : “ God, as separated from matter, the Hindoos contemplate as

a being reposing in his own happiness, destitute of ideas ; as infinite placidity ; as an unruffled sea of bliss ; as being perfectly abstracted and void of consciousness. They therefore deem it the height of perfection to be like this being. The person whose very nature, say they, is absorbed in divine meditation ; whose life is like a sweet sleep, unconscious and undisturbed ; who does not even desire God, and who is changed into the image of the ever-blessed, obtains absorption into Brumhu."* And that this doctrine of absorption is taken literally is proved, not merely by the terms in which it is expressed, though these are sufficiently unequivocal ; but by its being opposed by some of the followers of Vishnoo, and by a few also of their philosophers. Mr. Ward quotes Jumudugnee, as an exception to the common opinion : He says, " The idea of losing a distinct existence by absorption, as a drop is lost in the ocean, is abhorrent. It is pleasant to feed on sweetmeats, but no one wishes to be the sweetmeat itself." So satisfactorily is this point made out against the " wisdom of this world ;" by it the world neither knew God nor man.

Another notion equally extensive and equally destructive of the original doctrines of the immortality of the human soul, and a state of future rewards and punishments, which sprung up in the Egyptian schools, and was from thence transmitted into Greece, India, and throughout all Asia, was that of a periodical destruction and renovation of all things. " They conceived," says Diodorus Siculus, " that the universe undergoes a periodical conflagration ; after which all things were to be restored to their primitive form, to pass again through a similar succession of changes." The primitive tenet, of which this was a corruption, is also evident ; and it affords another singular instance of the subtlety and mischief of that spirit of error which operated with so much activity in early times, that the doctrine of the destruction of the world, and the consequent termination of the probationary state of the human race preparatory to the general judgment, an awful and most salutary

* Ward's View of the Hindoos, 8vo., vol. ii., pp. 177, 178.

revelation, should have been so wrought into philosophic theory, and so surrounded with poetic embellishment, as to engage the intellect, and to attract the imagination, only the more effectually to destroy the great moral of a doctrine which was not denied, and covertly to induce an entire unbelief in the eternal future existence of man.

As the Stoics held that all inferior divinities and human souls were portions separated from the soul of the world, and would return into the first celestial fire, so they supposed, that at the same time the whole visible world would be consumed in one general conflagration. “Then,” says Seneca, “after an interval the world will be entirely renewed, every animal will be reproduced, and a race of men free from guilt will re-people the earth. Degeneracy and corruption are, however, to creep in again, and the same process is to go on for ever.”* This, too, is the Brahminical notion: “The Hindoos are taught to believe that at the end of every calpa,” creation or formation, “all things are absorbed in the Deity; and at a stated time the creative power will again be called into action.”† And though the system of the Budhists denies a Creator, it holds the same species of revolution: “They are of opinion that the universe is eternal, at least they neither know it had a beginning, nor will have an end; that it is homogeneous, and composed of an infinite number of similar worlds, each of which is a likeness of the other, and each of which is in a constant state of alteration,—not stationary for a moment,—at the instant of greatest perfection beginning to decline, and at the moment of greatest chaotic ruin beginning to regenerate. They compare such changes to a wheel in motion perpetually going round.”‡

But other instances of darkness and error among even civilized Heathens respecting the human soul, and a future state, are not wanting; for it is a fact which ought never to be lost sight of in these inquiries, that among Pagans opinions on these subjects have never been either certain or rational; and

* Epistle 9.

† Moore's Hindoo Pantheon.

‡ Dr. Davy's Account of Ceylon.

that error, once received, has in no instance been exchanged for truth ; but has gone on multiplying itself, and assuming an infinite variety of forms.

The doctrine of Aristotle and the Peripatetics gives no countenance to the opinion of the soul's immortality, or even of its existence after death. Democritus and his followers taught, that the soul is material and mortal ; Heraclitus, that when the soul is purified from the moist vapours, it returns into the soul of the universe ; if not, it perishes : Epicurus and his followers, that " when death is, we are not." The leading men among the Romans, when philosophy was introduced among them, followed the various Greek sects. We have seen the uncertainty of Cicero.* Pliny declares, that *non magis a morte sensus ullus aut animæ aut corpori quam ante natalem*, " the soul and body have no more sense after death, than before we were born."† Cæsar, " that beyond death, there is *neque curæ neque gaudio locum*, place neither for care nor joy."‡ Seneca in his 102d Epistle speaks of a

* From the philosophical works of Cicero it may be difficult to collect his own opinions, as he chiefly occupies himself in explaining those of others ; but in his Epistles to his friends, when, as Warburton observes, we see the man divested of the politician and the sophist, he professes his disbelief of a future state in the frankest manner. Thus in lib. 6, epist. 3, to Torquatus, written in order to console him in the unfortunate state of the affairs of their party, he observes, *Sed hæc consolatioq̃ levis est ; illa gravior, quâ te uti spero ; ego certe utor. Nec enim dum ero, angar ullâ re, cum omni vacem culpâ ; et si non ero, sensu omnino carebo*. " But there is another and a far higher consolation, which I hope is your support, as it certainly is mine. For so long as I shall preserve my innocence, I will never whilst I exist be anxiously disturbed at any event that may happen ; and if I shall cease to exist, all sensibility must cease with me."

Similar expressions are found in his letters to Toranius, to Lucius Mescinius, and others, which those who wish to prove him a believer in the soul's immortality endeavour to account for by supposing that he accommodated his sentiments to the principles of his friends ;—a singular solution, and one which scarcely can be seriously adopted, since in the above-cited passage he so strongly expresses what is his own opinion, and hopes that his friend takes refuge in the same consolation. It may be allowed, that Cicero alternated between unbelief and doubt ; but never, I think, between doubt and certainty. The last was a point to which he never seems to have reached,

† *Nat. Hist.*, lib. 7, cap. 55.

‡ Sallust, *De Bello Catil.*, sec. 5.

divine part within us, which joins us to the gods ; and tells Lucilius, “ that the day which he fears as his last *æterni natalis est*, is the birth-day of eternity ;” but then he says, “ he was willing to hope it might be so, on the account of some great men, *rem gratissimam promittentium magis quam probantium*, who promised what they could not prove ;” and on other occasions he speaks out plainly, and says that death makes us incapable of good or evil. The poets, it is true, spoke of a future state of rewards and punishments ; they had the joys of Elysium, and the tortures of Tartarus ; but both philosophers and poets regarded them as vulgar fables. Virgil does not hide this, and numerous quotations of the same import might be given both from him and others of their poets.

*Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas ;
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subjecit pedibus, strepitumque Acherontis avari !*

Georg. 2, l. 490, &c.

“ Happy the man, whose vigorous soul can pierce
Through the formation of this universe,
Who nobly dares despise, with soul sedate,
The din of Acheron, and vulgar fears, and fate.”

WARTON.

Nor was the scepticism and unbelief of the wise and great long kept from the vulgar, among whom they wished to maintain the old superstitions as instruments by which they might be controlled. Cicero complains, that the common people in his day mostly followed the doctrine of Epicurus.

Since, then, these erroneous and mischievous views concerning God, providence, and a future state, or the total denial of all of them, are found to have resulted from the rejection or loss of the primitive traditions ; and, further, as it is clear that such errors are totally subversive of the fundamental principles of morals and religion, and afford inducement to the commission of every species of crime without remorse, or fear of punishment ; the necessity of a republication of these great doctrines in an explicit and authentic manner, and of institu-

tions for teaching and enforcing them upon all ranks of men, is evident ; and, whatever proof may be adduced for the authentication of the Christian revelation, it can never be pretended, that a revelation to restore these great principles was not called for by the actual condition of man ; and in proportion to the necessity of the case, is the strength of the presumption that one has been mercifully afforded.

CHAPTER VII.

The Necessity of Revelation :—State of Morals among the Heathen

IF the necessity of a revelation may be argued from the confused, contradictory, and false notions of heathen nations as to the principal doctrines of religion ; no less forcibly may the argument be pursued from the state of their morals both in knowledge and in practice.

This argument is simple and obvious. If the nature, extent, and obligation of moral rules had become involved in great misapprehension and obscurity ; if what they knew of right and wrong wanted an enforcement and an authority which it could not receive from their respective systems ; and if, for want of efficient counteracting religious principles, the general practice had become irretrievably vicious ;—a direct interposition of the divine Being was required for the republication of moral rules, and for their stronger enforcement.

The notions of all civilized Heathens on moral subjects, like their knowledge of the first principles of religion, mingled as they were with their superstitions, prove that both were derived from a common source. There was a substantial agreement among them in many questions of right and wrong ; but the boundaries which they themselves acknowledged were not kept up, and the rule was gradually lowered to the practice, though not in all cases so as entirely to efface the original communication.

This is an important consideration, inasmuch as it indicates the transmission of both religion and morals from the patriarchal system, and that both the primitive doctrines and their corresponding morals received early sanctions, the force of which was felt through succeeding ages. It shows, too, that even the Heathen have always been under a moral government. The laws of God have never been quite obliterated,

though their practice has ever been below their knowledge, and though the law itself was greatly and wilfully corrupted through the influence of their vicious inclinations.

This subject may perhaps be best illustrated by adverting to some of the precepts of the second table, which embodied the morals of the patriarchal ages, under a new sanction. Of the obligation of these, all heathen nations have been sensible; and yet, in all, the rule was perverted in theory, and violated in practice.

Murder has, in all ages, and among all civilized and most savage heathen nations also, been regarded as an atrocious crime; and yet the rule was so far accommodated to the violent and ferocious habits of men, as to fill every heathen land with blood-guiltiness. The slight regard paid to the life of man in all heathen countries cannot have escaped the notice of reflecting minds. They knew the rule; but the act, under its grosser and more deliberate forms only, was thought to violate it. Among the Romans, men were murdered in their very pastimes, by being made to fight with wild beasts and with each other; and though this was sometimes condemned as a *spectaculum crudele et inhumanum*, yet the passion for blood increased, and no war ever caused so great a slaughter as did the gladiatorial combats. They were at first confined to the funerals of great persons. The first show of this kind exhibited in Rome by the Bruti, on the death of their father, consisted of three couples; but afterwards the number greatly increased. Julius Cæsar presented three hundred pairs of gladiators; and the Emperor Trajan, ten thousand of them for the entertainment of the people. Sometimes these horrid exhibitions, in which, as Seneca says, *homo, sacra res, homo jam per lusum et jocum occiditur*, when the practice had attained its height, deprived Europe of twenty thousand lives in one month.*

* Though Cicero, Seneca, and others, condemned these barbarities, it was in so incidental and indifferent a manner, as to produce no effect. They were abolished soon after the establishment of Christianity; and this affords an illustration of the admission of Rousseau himself: *La Philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la religion ne le fasse encore mieux; et la religion en fait beaucoup que la philosophie ne sauroit faire.*

This is further illustrated by the treatment of slaves, which composed so large a portion of the population of ancient states.* They knew and acknowledged the evil of murder, and had laws for its punishment; but to this despised class of human beings they did not extend the rule; nor was killing them accounted murder, any more than the killing of a beast. The master had absolute power of life, or death, or torture; and their lives were therefore sacrificed in the most wanton manner.†

By various sophistries, suggested by their vices, their selfishness, and their cruelty, the destruction of children also, under certain circumstances, ceased to be regarded as a crime. In many heathen nations it was allowed to destroy the fœtus in the womb; to strangle, or drown, or expose infants, especially if sickly or deformed; and that which in Christian states is considered as the most atrocious of crimes was, by the most celebrated of ancient pagan nations, esteemed a wise and political expedient to rid the state of useless or troublesome members, and was even enjoined by some of their most celebrated sages and legislators. The same practice continues to this day in a most affecting extent, not only among uncivilized Pagans, but also among the Hindoos and the Chinese.

This practice of perverting and narrowing the extent of the holy law of God which had been transmitted to them, was exemplified also in the allowing or rather commending the practice of suicide.

* In the 110th Olympiad, there were at Athens only twenty-one thousand citizens and forty thousand slaves. It was common for a private citizen of Rome to have ten or twenty thousand.—TAYLOR'S *Civil Law*.

† The youth of Sparta made it their pastime frequently to lie in ambush by night for the slaves, and sally out with daggers upon every helot who came near them, and murder him in cold blood. The Ephori, as soon as they entered upon their office, declared war against them in form, that there might be an appearance of destroying them legally. It was the custom for Vedius Pollio, when his slaves had committed a fault, sometimes a very trifling one, to order them to be thrown into his fish-ponds, to feed his lampreys. It was the constant custom, as we learn from Tacitus, (*Annal.* xiv. 43,) when a master was murdered in his own house, to put all the slaves to death indiscriminately. For a just and affecting account of the condition of slaves in ancient states, see Porteus's *Beneficial Effects of Christianity*.

Doubtless, the primitive law against murder condemned also hatred and revenge. Our Lord restored it to its true meaning among the Jews; and that it was so understood even among the ancient Heathens, is clear from a placable and forgiving spirit being sometimes praised, and the contrary censured, by their sages, moralists, and poets. Yet not only was the rule violated almost universally in practice; but it was also disputed and denied in many of its applications by the authority of their wise and learned men; so that, as far as the authority of moral teachers went, a full scope was given for the indulgence of hatred, malice, and insatiate revenge. One of the qualities of the good man described by Cicero is, that he hurts no one, except he be injured himself. *Qui nemini nocet, nisi lacessitus injuriâ*; and he declares as to himself, *Sic ulciscar facinora singula quemadmodum a quibusque sum provocatus*: "I will revenge all injuries, according as I am provoked by any." And Aristotle speaks of meekness as a defect, because the meek man will not avenge himself; and of revenge, as *ανθρωπικότερον μᾶλλον*, "a more manly thing."*

"Thou shalt not commit adultery," was another great branch of the patriarchal law, existing before the Decalogue, as appears from the sacred history. It forbids uncleanness of every kind in thought and deed, and specially guards the sanctity of marriage; nor is there any precept more essential to public morals, and to the whole train of personal, social, domestic, and national virtues.

It is not necessary to bring detailed proof of the almost universal gross and habitual violation of this sacred law in all pagan nations, both ancient and modern, from its first stages down to crimes *παρα φύσιν*. This is sufficiently notorious to all acquainted with the history of the ancient and modern pagan world; and will not be denied by any. It is only requisite to show, that they had the law, and that it was weakened and corrupted, so as to render a republication necessary.

The public laws against adultery, in almost all heathen

* Moral., lib. iv., c. 11.

states, and the censures of moralists and satirists, are sufficiently in proof that such a law was known ; and the higher the antiquity of the times, the more respect we see paid to chastity, and the better was the practice. Nor was the act only considered, by some of their moralists, as sinful ; but the thought and desire, as may be observed in passages both in Greek and Roman writers. But, as to this vice too, as well as others, the practice lowered the rule ; and the authority of one lawgiver and moralist being neutralized by another, licence was given to unbounded offence.

Divorce, formerly permitted only in cases of adultery, became, at length, a mere matter of caprice, and that both with Jews and Gentiles ; and, among the latter, adultery was chiefly interpreted as the violation of the marriage-covenant by the wife only, or by the man with a married woman, thus leaving the husband a large licence of vicious indulgence. To whoredom, and similar vices, lawgivers, statesmen, philosophers, and moralists, gave the sanction of their opinions and their practice ; which foul blot of ancient Heathenism continues, to this day, to mark the morals of pagan countries.*

In most civilized states the very existence of society, and the natural selfishness of man, led to the preservation of the ancient laws against theft and rapine, and to the due execution of the statutes made against them ; but in this, also, we see the same disposition to corrupt the original prohibition. It

* Terence says of simple fornication, "*Non est scelus, adolescentulum scortari flagitium est.*" The Spartans, through a principle in the institutions of Lycurgus, which controlled their ancient opinions on this subject, in certain prescribed cases allowed adultery in the wife ; and Plutarch, in his *Life of Lycurgus*, mentioning these laws, commends them as being made *φυσικως και πολιτικως*, "according to nature and polity." Callicratidas, the Pythagorean, tells the wife that she must bear with her husband's irregularities, since the law allows this to the man and not to the woman. Plutarch speaks to the same purpose in several places of his writings. On the other hand, some of the philosophers condemned adultery ; and, in many places, it was punished in the woman with death, in the man with infamy. Still, however, the same vacillation of judgment, and the same limitations of what they sometimes confess to be the ancient rule and custom, may be observed throughout ; but, as far as the authority of philosophers went, it was chiefly on the side of vicious practice.

was not extended to strangers, or to foreign countries, nor was it generally interpreted to reach to any thing more than flagrant acts of violence. Usury, extortion, and fraud were rather regarded as laudatory acts than as injurious to character; and so they continue to be esteemed wherever Christianity has not issued her authoritative laws against injustice in all its degrees. Throughout India there is said to be scarcely such a thing as common honesty.

Another great branch of morality is truth; but on the obvious obligation to speak it, we find the same laxity both of opinion and practice; and, in this, Heathenism presents a striking contrast to Christianity, which commands us to speak the truth one to another, and denounces damnation against him that loves or makes a lie.

They knew that *tollendum est ex rebus contrahendis omne mendacium*,* “no lie was to be used in contracts,” and that an honest man should do and speak nothing in falsehood, and with hypocrisy; but they more frequently departed from this rule than enjoined it. The rule of Menander was, “A lie is better than a hurtful truth.” Plato says, “He may lie who knows how to do it in a fit season;” and Maximus Tyrius, “that there is nothing decorous in truth but when it is profitable;” and both Plato and the Stoics frame a Jesuitical distinction between lying with the lips and in the mind. Deceit and falsehood have been, therefore, the character of all pagan nations, and continue so to be to this day. This is the character of the Chinese, as given by the best authorities; and of the Hindoos it is stated, by the most respectable Europeans, not merely Missionaries, but by those who have long held official, civil, and judicial situations among them, that their disregard of truth is uniform and systematic. When discovered, it causes no surprise in the one party, or humiliation in the other. Even when they have truth to tell, they seldom fail to bolster it up with some appended falsehood.†

* CIC. *De Off.*, l. iii., n. 81.

† “It is the business of all,” says Sir John Shore, “from the Ryot to the Dewan, to conceal and deceive. The simplest matters of fact are designedly covered with a veil, which no human understanding can penetrate.” The

Nor can the force of the argument in favour of the necessity of a direct revelation of the will of God from these facts be weakened, by alleging, what is unhappily too true, that where the Christian revelation has been known, great violations of all these rules have been commonly observed ; for, not to urge the moral superiority of the worst of Christian states, in all of them the authority and sanction of religion is directed against vice ; whilst among Heathens, their religion itself, having been corrupted by the wickedness of man, has become the great instrument of encouraging every species of wickedness. This circumstance so fully demonstrates the necessity of an interposition on the part of God to restore truth to the world, that it deserves a particular consideration.

prevalence of perjury is so universal, as to involve the Judges in extreme perplexity. "The honest men," says Mr. Strachey, "as well as the rogues, are perjured. Even where the real facts are sufficient to convict the offender, the witnesses against him must add others, often notoriously false, or utterly incredible, such as, in Europe, would wholly invalidate their testimony."

CHAPTER VIII.

The Necessity of Revelation :—Religions of the Heathen.

THAT the religions which have prevailed among pagan nations have been destructive of morality, cannot be denied.

How far the speculative principles which they embodied had this effect, has already been shown ; we proceed to their more direct influence.

The gloomy superstition which pervaded most of them fostered ferocious and cruel dispositions.

The horrible practice of offering human sacrifices prevailed throughout every region of the heathen world, to a degree which is almost incredible ; and it still prevails in many populous countries where Christianity has not yet been made known. There are incontestable proofs of its having subsisted among the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Phenicians, and all the various nations of the east. It was one of the crying sins of the Canaanites. The contagion spread over every part of Asia, Africa, and Europe. The Greeks and Romans, though less involved in this guilt than many other nations, were not altogether untainted with it. On great and extraordinary occasions they had recourse to what was esteemed the most efficacious and most meritorious sacrifice that could be offered to the gods,—the effusion of human blood.* But among more barbarous nations this practice took a firmer root : The Scythians and Thracians, the Gauls and the Germans, were strongly addicted to it ; and our own island, under the gloomy and ferocious despotism of the Druids, was polluted with the religious murder of its inhabitants ; in the semi-civilized kingdoms on the western side of Africa, as

* Plutarch, in the *Lives* of Themistocles, Marcellus, and Aristides. *Livy*, l. xxii., c. 57. *Florus*, l. i., c. 13. *Virg.*, *Æn.* x. 518 ; xi. 81.

Dahomy, Ashantee, and others, many thousands fall every year, victims to superstition ; in America, Montezuma offered twenty thousand victims yearly to the sun ; and modern navigators have found the practice throughout the whole extent of the vast Pacific ocean. As for India, the cries of its abominable and cruel superstitions have been sounded repeatedly in the ears of the British public and its Legislature ; and, including infants and widows, not fewer than ten thousand lives fall a sacrifice to idolatry in our own eastern dominions yearly.*

The influence of these practices in obdurate the heart, and disposing it to habitual cruelty, need not be pointed out ; but the religions of Paganism have been as productive of impurity as of blood.

The Floralia, among the Romans, were celebrated, for four days together, by the most shameless actions ; and their Mysteries, in every country, whatever might be their original intent, became horribly corrupt. It was in the temples of many of their deities, and on their religious festivals, that every kind of impurity was most practised ; and this continues to the present day throughout all the regions of modern Paganism.†

This immoral tendency of their religion was confirmed and perfected by the very character and actions of their gods, whose names were perpetually in their mouths, and whose murderous or obscene exploits, whose villanies and chicaneries, whose hatreds and strifes were the subject of their popular legends ; which made up, in fact, the only theology—if so it may be called—of the body of the people. That they should be better than their gods, was not to be expected ; and worse they could not be. Deities with such attributes could not

* See Maurice's *Indian Antiquities* ; the writings of Dr. Claudius Buchanan ; Ward on the *Hindoos* ; Dubois on *Hindoo Manners*, &c. ; Robertson's *History of America* ; Bowditch's *Account of Ashantee* ; Moore's *Hindoo Pantheon* ; and Porteus and Ryan on the *Effects of Christianity*.

† See Leland and Whitby on the *Necessity of a Revelation* ; and the writers on the customs of India—Ward, Dubois, Buchanan, and Moore—before referred to.

but corrupt ; and be appealed to, not merely to excuse, but to sanctify, the worst practices.*

Let this argument, then, be summed up :—

All the leading doctrines on which religion rests had either been corrupted by a grovelling and immoral superstition, among heathen nations, or the philosophic speculations of their wisest men had introduced principles destructive of man's accountability, and present and future hope. On morals themselves, the original rules were generally perverted, limited, or rejected ; whilst the religious rites, and the legendary character of the deities worshipped, to the exclusion of the true God, gave direct incitement and encouragement to vice. Thus the grossest ignorance on divine subjects universally prevailed ; the learned were involved in inextricable perplexities ; and the unlearned received as truth the most absurd and monstrous fables, all of them, however, favourable to vicious indulgence. The actual state of morals, also, accorded with the corrupt religious systems, and the lax moral principles, which they adopted ; so that in every heathen state of ancient times, the description of the Apostle Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, is supported by the evidence of their own historians and poets. The same may also be affirmed of modern pagan countries, whose moral condition may explain more fully—as they are now so well known through our intercourse with them—the genius and moral tendency of the ancient idolatries, with which those of India, and other parts of the east especially, so exactly agree.

These are the facts. They affect not a small portion of mankind, but all who have not had the benefits of the doctrines and morals of the holy Scriptures ; there are no exceptions from this of any consequence to the argument, though some difference in the morals of heathen states may be allowed. Where the Scriptures are unknown, there is not, nor ever has

* Hence Chærea, in Terence, pertinently enough asks, *Quod fecit is qui templa cæli summa sonitu concutit, ego homuncio non facerem ?* Eunuch., act 3, sc. 5. He only imitated Jupiter. And, says Sextus Empyricus, “ That cannot be unjust which is done by the god Mercury, the Prince of thieves ; for how can a god be wicked ? ”—*Apud. Euseb. Præp.*, lib. vi., cap. 10.

been since the corruption of the primitive religion, a religious system which has contained just views of God and religious truth, the Theists of the present day being judges ;—none which has enjoined a correct morality, or even opposed any effectual barrier against the deterioration of public manners. These facts cannot be denied ; for the allegations formerly made of the morality of modern pagan nations have been sufficiently refuted by a better acquaintance with them ; and the conclusion is irresistible, that an express revelation of the will of God, accompanied with efficient corrective institutions, was become necessary, and is still demanded, by the ignorance and vices, the miseries and disorders, of every part of the earth into which Christianity has not been introduced.

But we may go another step. This exhibition of the moral condition of those nations who have not had the benefit of the renewal and republication of the truths of the patriarchal religion, not only supports the conclusion that new and direct revelations from God were necessary ; but the wants, which that condition so obviously created, will support other presumptions as to the nature and mode of that revelation, in the case of such a gift being bestowed in the exercise of the divine mercy. For if there is ground to presume, that Almighty God, in his compassion for his creatures, would not leave them to the unchecked influence of error and vice ; nor, upon the corruption of that simple but comprehensive doctrine, worship, and morals communicated to the progenitors of all those great branches of the family of man which have been spread over the earth, refuse to interpose to renew and to perfect that religious system which existed in an elementary form in the earliest ages, and give to it a form less liable to alteration and decay than when left to be transmitted by tradition alone ; there is equal ground to presume, that the revelation, whenever vouchsafed, should be of that nature, and accompanied by those circumstances, which would most effectually accomplish this benevolent purpose.

Presumptions as to the manner in which such a revelation would be made most effectually to accomplish its ends, are indeed to be guarded, lest we should set up ourselves as

adequate judges in a case which involves large views and extensive bearings of the divine government. But without violating this rule, it may, from the obviousness of the case, be presumed, that such a supernatural manifestation of truth should, 1. Contain explicit information on those important subjects on which mankind had most greatly and most fatally erred. 2. That it should accord with the principles of former revelations, given to men in the same state of guilt and moral incapacity as we find them in the present day. 3. That it should have a satisfactory external authentication. 4. That it should contain provisions for its effectual promulgation among all classes of men. All this, allowing the necessity and the probability of a supernatural communication of the will of God, must certainly be expected; and if the Christian revelation bears this character, it has certainly these presumptions in its favour, that it meets an obvious case of necessity, and confers the advantages just enumerated.

1./It gives information on those subjects which are most important to man, and which the world had darkened with the greatest errors;—the nature and perfections, claims and relations of God; his will,* as the rule of moral good and evil; the means of obtaining pardon and of conquering vice; the true Mediator between God and man; divine Providence; the chief good of man, respecting which alone more than three hundred different opinions among the ancient sages have been reckoned up; man's immortality and accountability; and a future state.

2. It is also required that a revelation should accord with the principles of former revelations, should any have been given./

For since it is a first principle, that God cannot err himself, nor deceive us, so far as one revelation renews or explains any truth in a preceding one, it must agree with the previous communication; and in what it adds to a preceding revelation, it cannot contradict any thing which it contains, if it be exhibited as a truth of unchangeable character on a duty of perpetual obligation.

* See note A, at the end of the chapter.

Now, whatever direct proof may be adduced in favour of the divine authority of the Jewish and Christian revelations, this at least may be confidently urged as evidence in their favour, that they have a substantial agreement and harmony among themselves, and with that ancient traditional system which existed in the earliest ages, and the fragments of which we find scattered among all nations. As to the patriarchal system of religion, to which reference has been so often made, beside the notices of it that are every where scattered in the Book of Genesis, we have ample and most satisfactory information in the ancient Book of Job, of which sufficient evidence may be given that it was written not later than the time of Moses; and that Job himself lived between the flood of Noah and the call of Abraham. Of the religion of the Patriarchs, as it existed just at that period when Sabianism, or the worship of the heavenly luminaries, began to make its appearance, and was restrained by the authority of the Judges, who were the heads of tribes or families, and as it existed in the preceding ages, as we find from the reference made by Job and his friends to the authority of their fathers, this book contains an ample and most satisfactory record; and from this venerable relic a very copious body of doctrinal and practical theology might be collected; but the following particulars will be sufficient for the present argument:—

One supreme Being alone is recognised throughout, as the object of adoration, worship, hope, trust, and fear; who is represented as of infinite and unsearchable majesty,—eternal, omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, and of perfect wisdom, justice, goodness; governing all things, noting and judging individuals, regarding the good, punishing the wicked, placable, listening to the prayers of the penitent. The corruption of man's nature is also stated; and his own inability to cleanse his heart from sin. Man, we are told, cannot be just with God, and therefore needs an intercessor. Sacrifices, as of divine appointment, and propitiatory in their nature, are also adverted to as commonly practised. Express reference is made to a divine Redeemer, and his future incarnation, as an object of hope. The doctrines of an immortal spirit in man,

and of the resurrection of the body, and a future judgment, have all a place in this system. Creation is ascribed to God ; and not only the general doctrine of Providence, but that most interesting branch of it, the connexion of dispensations of prosperity and affliction with moral ends. Murder, theft, oppression, injustice, adultery, intemperance, are all pointed out as violations of the laws of God ; and also wrath, envy, and other evil passions. Purity of heart, kindness, compassion to the poor, &c., are spoken of as virtues of the highest obligation ; and the fear and love of God are enjoined, with a calm and cheerful submission to his will, in humble trust that the darkness of present events will be ultimately cleared up, and shown to be consistent with the wisdom, justice, holiness and truth of God. The same points of doctrine and morals may also be collected from the Book of Genesis.

Such was the comprehensive system of patriarchal theology ; and it is not necessary to stop to point out, that these great principles are all recognised and taken up in the successive revelations by Moses, and by Christ ; exhibiting three religious systems, varying greatly in circumstances ; introduced at widely distant periods, and by agents greatly differing in their condition and circumstances ; but exactly harmonizing in every leading doctrinal tenet, and agreeing in their great moral impression upon mankind,—perfect purity of heart and conduct.

/3. That it should be accompanied with an explicit and impressive external authentication, of such a nature as to make its truth obvious to the mass of mankind, and to leave no reasonable doubt of its divine authority. /

The reason of this is evident. A mere impression of truth on the understanding could not by itself be distinguished from a discovery made by the human intellect, and could have no authority as a declaration of the will of a superior, with the person receiving it ; and as to others, it could only pass for the opinion of the individual who might promulge it.* An authentication of a system of truth, which professes to be the

* Vide chap. 3.

will, the law, of Him who, having made, has the right to command, us, external to the matter of the doctrine itself, is therefore necessary to give it authority, and to create the obligation to obedience. This accords with the opinion of all nations up to the earliest ages, and was so deeply wrought in the common sense of mankind, that all the heathen legislators of antiquity affected a divine commission, and all false religions have leaned for support upon pretended supernatural sanctions. The proofs of this are so numerous and well-known, that it is unnecessary to adduce them.

The authority of the ancient patriarchal religion rested on proof external to itself. We do not now examine the truth of its alleged authentications,—they were admitted ; and the force of the revelation depended upon them in the judgment of mankind. We have a most ancient book which records the opinions of the ante-Mosaic ages. The theology of those ages has been stated ; and from the history contained in that book, we learn that the received opinion was, that the almighty Lawgiver himself conversed with our first parents, and with the Patriarchs, under celestial appearances ; and that his mercies to men, or his judgments, failed not to follow ordinarily the observance or violation of the laws thus delivered ; which was, in fact, an authentication of them renewed from time to time. The course of nature, displaying his eternal power and Godhead, as well as the visitations of providence, was to them a constant confirmation of several of the leading truths in the theology they had received ; and by the deep impress of Divinity which this system received in the earliest ages from the attestations of singular judgments, and especially of the flood, it is only rationally to be accounted for, that it was universally transmitted, and waged so long a war against religious corruptions.

But notwithstanding the authentication of the primitive religion, as a matter of divine revelation, and the effects produced by it in the world for many ages ; and, indeed, still produced by it in its very broken and corrupted state, in condemning many sinful actions, so as to render the crimes of Heathens without excuse ; that system was traditional, and

liable to be altered by transmission. In proportion also as historical events were confounded by the lapse of time, and as the migrations and political convulsions of nations gave rise to fabulous stories, the external authenticating evidence became weak, and thus a merciful interposition on the part of God was, as we have seen, rendered necessary by the general ignorance of mankind. Indeed the primitive revelations supposed future ones, and were not in themselves regarded as complete. But if a republication only of the truth had been necessary, the old external evidence was so greatly weakened by the lapse of ages, which, as to most nations, had broken the line of historical testimony on which it so greatly rested, that it required a new authentication, in a form adapted to the circumstances of the world; and if an enlarged revelation were vouchsafed, every addition to the declared will of God needed an authentication of the same kind as at first.

If we presume, therefore, that a new revelation was necessary, we must presume that, when given, it would have an external authentication as coming from God, from which there could be no reasonable appeal; and we therefore conclude, that as the Mosaic and Christian revelations profess both to republish and to enlarge former revelations, the circumstance of their resting their claims on the external evidence of miracles and prophecy, is a presumption in their favour. Whether the evidence which they offer be decisive or not, is a future question; but in exhibiting such evidence they accord with the reason of the thing, and with the common sense of all ages.

4. It is further presumed, that should a revelation of religious truth and the will of God be made, it would provide means for its effectual communication to all classes of men.)

As the revelation supposed must be designed to restore and enlarge the communications of truth, and as, from the increase and dispersion of the human race, tradition had become an imperfect medium of conveying it, it is a fair presumption, that the persons through whom the communication was made should record it in writing. A revelation to every individual could not maintain the force of its original authentication;

because, as its attestation must be of a supernatural kind, its constant recurrence would divest it of that character, or weaken its force by bringing it among common and ordinary events. A revelation, on the contrary, to few, properly and publicly attested by supernatural occurrences, needed not repetition ; but the most natural and effectual mode of preserving the communication, once made, would be to transmit it by writing. Any corruption of the record would be rendered impracticable by its being publicly taught in the first instance, by a standard copy being preserved with care, or by such a number of copies being dispersed as to defy material alteration. This presumption is realized also in the Jewish and Christian revelations, as will be seen when the subject of the authority of the holy Scriptures comes to be discussed. They were first publicly taught, then committed to writing, and the copies were multiplied.

Another method of preserving and diffusing the knowledge of a revelation once made would be, the institution of public commemorative rites, at once preserving the memory of the fact and of the doctrine connected with it among great bodies of people, and leading them to such periodical inquiries as might preserve both with the greatest accuracy. These also we find in the institutions of Moses and of Christ ; and their weight in the argument for the truth of the mission of each will be adduced in its proper place.

Allowing it to be reasonable to presume, that a revelation would be vouchsafed, it is equally so to presume, that it should contain some injunctions favourable to its propagation among men of all ranks. For as the compassion of God to the moral necessities of his creatures generally is the ground on which so great a favour rests, we cannot suppose that one class of men should be allowed to make a monopoly of this advantage ; and this would be a great temptation to them to publish their own favourite or interested opinions under a pretended divine sanction, and tend to counteract the very purpose for which a revelation was given. Such a monopoly was claimed by the Priests of ancient pagan nations ; and that fatal effect followed. It was claimed for a time by a branch

of the Christian priesthood, contrary to the obligations of the institution itself; and the consequences were similar. Among the Heathens, the effect of this species of monopoly was, that those who encouraged superstition and ignorance among the people speedily themselves lost the truth, which, through a wicked policy, they concealed; and the case might have been the same in Christendom, but for the sacred records, and for those witnesses to the truth who prophesied and suffered, more or less, throughout the darkest ages.*

This reasonable expectation also is realized in the Mosaic and Christian revelations;—both provided for their general publication; both instituted an order of men, not to conceal, but to read and teach, the truth committed to them; both recognised a right in the people to search the record, and by it to judge of the ministration of the Priests; both made it obligatory on the people to be taught; and both separated one day in seven to afford leisure for that purpose.

Nothing but such a revelation, and with such accompanying circumstances, appears capable of reaching the actual case of mankind, and of effectually instructing and bringing them under moral control; † and, whether the Bible can be proved to be of divine authority or not, this at least must be granted, that it presents itself to us under these circumstances, and claims, for this very reason, the most serious and unprejudiced attention.

* Bishop Warburton endeavours to prove, by an elaborate argument in his *Divine Legation*, that in the Greater Mysteries the divine unity and the errors of polytheism were constantly taught. This, however, is most satisfactorily disproved by Dr. Leland, in his *Advantage and Necessity of a Divine Revelation*; to both of which works the reader is referred for information as to those singular institutions,—the heathen Mysteries.

† See note B, at the end of the chapter.

NOTE A.—PAGE 86.

DIFFERENT opinions have been held as to the ground of moral obligation. Grotius, Balguy, and Dr. S. Clarke, place it in the

eternal and necessary fitness of things. To this there are two objections. The first is, that it leaves the distinction between virtue and vice, in a great measure, arbitrary and indefinite, dependent upon our perception of fitness and unfitness, which, in different individuals, will greatly differ. The second is, that when a fitness or unfitness is proved, it is no more than the discovery of a natural essential difference or congruity, which alone cannot constitute a moral obligation to choose what is fit, and to reject what is unfit. When we have proved a fitness in a certain course of action, we have not proved that it is obligatory. A second step is necessary before we can reach this conclusion. Cudworth, Butler, Price, and others, maintain, that virtue carries its own obligation in itself; that the understanding at once perceives a certain action to be right, and therefore it ought to be performed. Several objections lie to this notion. 1. It supposes the understandings of men to determine precisely in the same manner concerning all virtuous and vicious actions; which is contrary to fact. 2. It supposes a previous rule, by which the action is determined to be right; but if the revealed will of God is not to be taken into consideration, what common rule exists among men? There is evidently no such rule, and therefore no means of certainly determining what is right. 3. If a common standard were known among men, and if the understandings of men determined in the same manner as to the conformity, or otherwise, of an action to that standard; what renders it a matter of obligation that any one should perform it? The rule must be proved to be binding, or no ground of obligation is established.

An action is obligatory, say others, because it is agreeable to the moral sense. This is the theory of Lord Shaftesbury and Dr. Hutcheson. By moral sense appears to be meant an instinctive approbation of right, and abhorrence of wrong, prior to all reflection on their nature, or their consequences. If any thing else were understood by it, then the moral sense must be the same with conscience, which we know to vary with the judgment, and cannot therefore be the basis of moral obligation. If conscience be not meant, then the moral sense must be considered as instinctive; a notion, certainly, which is disproved by the whole moral history of man. It may, indeed, be conceded, that such is the constitution of the human soul, that when those distinctions between actions, which have been taught by religious tradition or direct revelation, are known in their nature, relations, and consequences, the calm and sober judgments of men will approve of them; and that especially when they are considered abstractedly, that is, as not affecting and controlling their own interests and passions immediately, virtue may command complacency, and vice provoke abhorrence; but that, independent of

reflection on their nature or their consequences, there is an instinctive principle in man which abhors evil, and loves good, is contradicted by that variety of opinion and feeling on the vices and virtues, which obtains among all uninstructed nations. We applaud the forgiveness of an injury as magnanimous; a savage despises it as mean. We think it a duty to support and cherish aged parents; many nations, on the contrary, abandon them as useless, and throw them to the beasts of the field. Innumerable instances of this contrariety might be adduced, which are all contrary to the notion of instinctive sentiment. Instincts operate uniformly, but this assumed moral sense does not. Besides, if it be mere matter of feeling, independent of judgment, to love virtue, and abhor vice, the morality of the exercise of this principle is questionable; for it would be difficult to show, that there is any more morality, properly speaking, in the affections and disgusts of instinct than in those of the palate. If judgment, the knowledge and comparison of things, be included, then this principle supposes a uniform and universal individual revelation as to the nature of things to every man, or an intuitive faculty of determining their moral quality; both of which are too absurd to be maintained.

The only satisfactory conclusion on this subject is that which refers moral obligation to the will of God. "Obligation," says Warburton, "necessarily implies an obliger, and the obliger must be different from, and not one and the same with, the obliged. Moral obligation, that is, the obligation of a free agent, further implies a law which enjoins and forbids; but a law is the imposition of an intelligent superior, who hath power to exact conformity thereto." This Lawgiver is God; and whatever may be the reasons which have led him to enjoin this, and to prohibit that, it is plain that the obligation to obey lies not merely in the fitness and propriety of a creature obeying an infinitely wise and good Creator, (though such a fitness exists,) but in that obedience being enjoined.

Some, allowing this, would push the matter further, in search of a more remote ground of obligation. They put the question, "Why am I obliged to obey the will of God?" and give us the answer, "Because obedience to the commands of a benevolent God must be productive of the agent's happiness, on the whole." But this is putting out to sea again; for, 1. It cannot be proved that the consideration of our own happiness is a ground of moral obligation at all, except in some such vague sense as we use the term obligation when we say, "We are obliged to take exercise, if we would preserve our health." We should be in danger of setting up a standard by which to judge of the propriety of obeying God, when, indeed, we are but inadequate judges of what is for our happiness, on the whole

Or, 3. It would make moral obligation to rest upon our faith, that God can will only our happiness; which is a singular principle on which to build our obedience. On the contrary, the simple principle that moral obligation rests upon the will of God, by whatever means that will may be known, is unclogged with any of these difficulties; for, 1. It is founded on a clear principle of justice. He who made us has an absolute property in us, and may, therefore, command us; and, having actually commanded us, we cannot set up any claim of exemption,—we are his. 2. He has connected reward with obedience, and punishment with disobedience, and therefore made it necessary for us to obey, if we would secure our own happiness. Thus we are obliged, both by the force of the abstract principle, and by the motive resulting from a sanctioned command; or, in the language of the schools, we are obliged in reason, and obliged in interest; but each obligation evidently emanates from the will of God. Other considerations—such as the excellence and beauty of virtue, its tendency to individual happiness and universal order, &c.—may smooth the path of obedience, and render his commandments joyous; but the obligation, strictly speaking, can only rest in the will of the superior and commanding power.

NOTE B.—PAGE 92.

THOUGH some will allow the ignorance of former times, they think that the improved reason of man is now more adequate to the discovery of moral truth.

“They contend that the world was then in the infancy of knowledge; and argue as if the illustrious sages of old (whom they, nevertheless, sometimes extol in terms of extravagant panegyric) were very babes in philosophy, such as the wise ones of later ages regard with a sort of contemptuous commiseration.

“But may we not be permitted to ask whence this assumed superiority of modern over ancient philosophers has arisen; and whence the extraordinary influx of light, upon these latter times, has been derived? Is there any one so infatuated by his admiration of the present age, as seriously to think that the intellectual powers of man are stronger and more perfect now than they were wont to be? or that the particular talents of himself, or any of his contemporaries, are superior to those which shone forth in the luminaries of the Gentile world? Do the names even of Locke, Cudworth, Cumberland, Clarke, Wilkins, or Wollaston,—men so justly eminent in modern times, and who laboured so indefatigably to perfect the theory of natural religion,—convey to us an idea of greater intellectual ability than those of the consummate masters of the portico the grove, or

the lyceum? How is it, then, that the advocates for the natural perfection, or perfectibility, of human reason do not perceive that, for all the superiority of the present over former times, with respect to religious knowledge, we must be indebted to some intervening cause, and not to any actual enlargement of the human faculties? Is it to be believed that any man of the present age, of whatever natural talents he may be possessed, could have advanced one step beyond the heathen philosophers, in his pursuit of divine truth, had he lived in their times, and enjoyed only the light that was bestowed upon them? Or can it be fairly proved that, merely by the light of nature, or by reasoning upon such data only as men possess who never heard of revealed religion, any moral or religious truth has been discovered since the days when Athens and Rome affected to give laws to the intellectual, as well as to the political, world? That great improvements have since been made in framing systems of ethics, of metaphysics, and of what is called natural theology, need not be denied. But these improvements may easily be traced to one obvious cause, —the widely-diffused light of the Gospel, which, having shone, with more or less lustre, on all nations, has imparted, even to the most simple and illiterate of the sons of men, such a degree of knowledge on these subjects, as, without it, would be unattainable by the most learned and profound.”—VAN MILDERT's *Boyle's Lect.*

CHAPTER IX.

The Evidences necessary to authenticate a Revelation :— External Evidence.

THE evidence usually offered in proof of the divine authority of the Scriptures may be divided into external, internal, and collateral. /The external evidence consists of miracles and prophecy ; the internal evidence is drawn from the consideration of the doctrines taught, as being consistent with the character of God, and tending to promote the virtue and happiness of man ;/ and the collateral evidence arises from a variety of circumstances which, less directly than the former, prove the revelation to be of divine authority, but are yet supposed to be of great weight in the argument. On each of these kinds of evidence we shall offer some general remarks, tending to prepare the way for a demonstration of the divine authority of the holy Scriptures.

The principal and most appropriate evidence of a revelation from God must be external to the revelation itself: This has been before stated, but it may require a larger consideration.

A divine revelation has been well defined to be “a discovery of some proposition to the mind, which came not in by the usual exercise of its faculties, but by some miraculous divine interposition and attestation, either mediate or immediate.”* It is not thought necessary to attempt to prove such a revelation possible ; for as our argument is supposed to be with a person who acknowledges, not only that there is a God, but that he is the Creator of men, /it would be absurd in such a one to assert that he who gave us minds capable of knowledge is not able, instantly and immediately, to convey knowledge to us ; and that he who has given us the power

* Doddridge's Lectures, part 5, definition 63.

of communicating ideas to each other, has yet no means of communicating with us immediately from himself. /

We need not inquire whether external evidence of a revelation is, in all cases, requisite to him who immediately, and at first, receives it ; for the question is not whether private revelations have ever been made by God to individuals, and what evidence is required to authenticate them ; but what is the kind of evidence which we ought to require of one who professes to have received a revelation of the will of God, with a command to communicate it to us, and to enjoin it upon our acceptance and submission, as the rule of our opinions and manners.

He may believe that a divine communication has been made to himself ; but his belief has no authority to command ours. He may have actually received it ; but we have not the means of knowing it, without proof.

That proof is not the high and excellent nature of the truths he teaches ; in other words, that which is called the “ internal evidence ” cannot be that proof ; for we cannot tell whether the doctrines he teaches—though they should be capable of a higher degree of rational demonstration than any delivered to the world before—may not be the fruits of his own mental labour. He may be conscious that they are not ; but we have no means of knowing that of which he is conscious, except by his own testimony : To us, therefore, they would have no authority but as the opinions of a man whose intellectual attainments we might admire, but to whom we could not submit as to an infallible guide ; and the less so if any part of the doctrine taught by him were either mysterious and above our reason, or contrary to our interests, prejudices, and passions.

If, therefore, any person should profess to have received a revelation of truth from God to teach to mankind, and that he was directed to command their obedience to it, on pain of the divine displeasure, he would be asked for some external authentication of his mission ; nor would the reasonableness and excellence of his doctrines be accepted in place of this. The latter might entitle him to attention ; but nothing short

of the former would be thought a ground sufficiently strong for yielding to him an absolute obedience: Without it he might reason, and be heard with respect; but he could not command. On this very reasonable ground the Jews, on one occasion, asked our Lord, "By what authority doest thou these things?" and on another, "What sign showest thou unto us?"

Agreeably to this the authors, both of the Jewish and the Christian revelations, profess to have authenticated their mission by the two great external proofs,—miracles and prophecy; and it remains to be considered whether this kind of authentication be reasonably sufficient to command our faith and obedience.

The question is not whether we may not conceive of external proofs of the mission of Moses, and of Christ and his Apostles, differing from those which are assumed to have been given, and more convincing. In whatever way the authentication had been made, we might have conceived of modes of proof differing in kind, or more ample in circumstance; so that to ground an objection upon the absence of a particular kind of proof for which we have a preference, would be trifling.* But this is the question, "Is a mission to teach the

* "We know not beforehand what degree or kind of natural information it were to be expected God would afford men, each by his own reason and experience, nor how far he would enable and effectually dispose them to communicate it, whatever it should be, to each other; nor whether the evidence of it would be certain, highly probable, or doubtful; nor whether it would be given with equal clearness and conviction to all. Nor could we guess—upon any good ground, I mean—whether natural knowledge, or even the faculty itself by which we are capable of attaining it, reason, would be given us at once or gradually. In like manner we are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge it were to be expected God would give mankind by revelation, upon supposition of his affording one; or how far, or in what way, he would interpose miraculously to qualify them to whom he should originally make the revelation, for communicating the knowledge given by it, and to secure their doing it to the age in which they should live, and to secure its being transmitted to posterity. We are equally ignorant whether the evidence of it would be certain, or highly probable, or doubtful; or whether all who should have any degree of instruction from it, and any degree of evidence of its truth, would have the same; or whether the scheme would be revealed at once, or unfolded gradually: Nay, we are not, in any sort, able to judge whether it

will of God to man, under his immediate authority, sufficiently authenticated when miracles are really performed, and prophecies actually and unequivocally accomplished?" To this point only the inquiry need now go; for whether real miracles were performed by Moses and Christ, and whether prophecies were actually uttered by them, and received unequivocal accomplishment, will be reserved for a further stage of the inquiry.

There is a popular, a philosophic, and a theological sense of the term "miracle."

A miracle, in the popular sense, is a prodigy, or an extraordinary event, which surprises us by its novelty. In a more accurate and philosophic sense, a miracle is an effect which does not follow from any of the regular laws of nature, or which is inconsistent with some known law of it, or contrary to the settled constitution and course of things. Accordingly, all miracles presuppose an established system of nature, within the limits of which they operate, and with the order of which they disagree.

were to have been expected that the revelation should have been committed to writing; or left to be handed down, and consequently corrupted, by verbal tradition, and, at length, sunk under it, if mankind so pleased, and during such time as they are permitted, in the degree they evidently are, to act as they will.

"Now, since it has been shown that we have no principles of reason upon which to judge beforehand how it were to be expected revelation should have been left, or what was most suitable to the divine plan of government in any of the forementioned respects; it must be quite frivolous to object afterwards, as to any of them, against its being left one way rather than another; for this would be to object against things upon account of their being different from our expectations, which has been shown to be without reason. And thus we see that the only question concerning the truth of Christianity is, whether it be a real revelation, not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for; and, concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be, not whether it be a book of such sort, and so promulged, as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a divine revelation should be. And therefore, neither obscurity, nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of the like kind, though they had been much more considerable in degree than they are, could overthrow the authority of the Scripture, unless the Prophets, Apostles, or our Lord, had promised that the book containing the divine revelation should be secure from these things."—*BUTLER'S Analogy*.

Of a miracle, in the theological sense, many definitions have been given.* That of Dr. Samuel Clarke is : “ A miracle is a work effected in a manner unusual, or different from the common and regular method of providence, by the interposition of God himself, or of some intelligent agent superior to man, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.”

Mr. Horne defines a miracle to be “ an effect or event, contrary to the established constitution or course of things, or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the assistance, or by the permission, of God.”† This definition would be more complete in the theological sense, if the last clause in Dr. S. Clarke’s definition were added to it, “ for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.” With this addition, the definition will be sufficiently satisfactory, as it explains the nature of the phenomenon, and gives the reason or end of its occurrence.

Farmer, in his *Dissertation on Miracles*, denies to any created intelligences, however high, the power of working miracles, when acting from themselves alone. This dispute is only to be settled by a strict definition of terms ; but whatever power may be allowed to superior beings to produce miraculous effects, or effects apparently so, by the control they may be supposed to exert over natural objects ; yet, as they are all under the government of God, they have certainly no power to interfere with his work, and the order of his providence, at pleasure. Whatever they do, therefore, whether by virtue of natural power, or power specially communicated, they must do it by commission, or at least by licence.

The miracles under consideration are such effects as agree with the definition just given, and such as are wrought either immediately by God himself, to attest the divine mission

* The reader may see several of them enumerated and examined in Dodridge’s *Lectures*, Part 5.

† *Introduction to the Critical Study of the Scriptures*, vol. i. c. 4, sect. 2.

of particular persons, and to authenticate their doctrines; or by superior beings commissioned by him for the same purpose; or by the persons themselves who profess this divine authority, in order to prove that they have been invested with it by God.

The possibility of miracles wrought by the power of God can be denied by none but Atheists, or those whose system is substantially atheistic. Spinoza denies that any power can supersede that of nature; or that any thing can disturb or interrupt the order of things; and, accordingly, he defines a miracle to be "a rare event, happening in consequence of some laws that are unknown to us." This is a definition of a prodigy, not of a miracle; but if miracles, in the proper sense, be allowed, that is, if the facts themselves, which have been commonly called miraculous, be not disputed, this method of accounting for them is obviously most absurd; inasmuch as it is supposed that these unknown laws chanced to come into operation just when men, professing to be endued with miraculous powers, wished them, whilst yet such laws were to them unknown. For instance, when Moses contended with the Egyptian magicians, though these laws were unknown to him, he ventured to depend upon their operation, and by chance they served his purpose.

To one who believes in a supreme Creator of all things, and the dependence of all things upon his power and will, miraculous interpositions must be allowed possible; nor is there any thing in them repugnant to our ideas of his wisdom and immutability, and the perfection of his works. They are departures from the ordinary course of God's operation, but this does not arise from any natural necessity, to remedy an unforeseen evil, or to repair imperfections in his work; the reasons for them are moral and not natural reasons, and the ends they are intended to accomplish are moral ends. They remind us, when they occur, that there is a power superior to nature; and that all nature, even to its first and most uniform laws, depends upon him. They are among the chief means by which He, who is by nature invisible, makes himself, as it were, visible to his creatures, who are so prone to forget him

lirely, or to lose sight of him by reason of the interposition the veil of material objects.*

Granting, then, the possibility of miraculous interposition the part of the great Author of nature, on special occasions, and for great ends, in what way and under what circumstances does such an interposition authenticate the divine mission of those who profess to be sent by him to teach his will to mankind?

* Bishop Butler has satisfactorily shown, in his *Analogy*, (Part ii., c. 11,) that there can be no such presumption against miracles as to render them, in any wise, incredible, but what would conclude against such uncommon appearances as comets, and against there being any such powers in nature as magnetism and electricity, so contrary to the properties of other bodies not endowed with these powers. But he observes, "Take in the consideration of religion, or the moral system of the world, and then we see distinct particular reasons for miracles, to afford mankind instruction, additional to that of nature, and to attest the truth of it; and our being able to discern reasons for them, gives a positive credibility to the history of them, in cases where those reasons hold."

"It is impossible," says an oracle among modern unbelievers, (Voltaire,) that a Being infinitely wise should make laws in order to violate them. He would not derange the machine of his own construction, unless it were for improvement. But as a God, he hath, without doubt, made it as perfect as possible; or, if he had foreseen any imperfection likely to result from it, he would surely have provided against it from the beginning, and not be under a necessity of changing it afterwards. He is both unchangeable and omnipotent, and therefore can neither have any desire to alter the course of nature, nor have any need to do so."

"This argument," says Dr. Van Mildert, "is grounded on a misconception of a misrepresentation of the design of miracles, which is not the remedy of any physical defect, not to rectify any original or accidental imperfections in the laws of nature, but to manifest to the world the interposition of the Almighty, for especial purposes of a moral kind. It is simply to make known to mankind, that it is he who addresses them, and that whatever is accompanied with this species of evidence, comes from him, and claims their implicit belief and obedience. The perfection, therefore, or imperfection, of the laws of nature has nothing to do with the question. All nature is subservient to the will of God; and as his existence and attributes are manifested in the ordinary course of nature, so, in the extraordinary work of miracles, his will is manifested, by the display of his absolute sovereignty over the course of nature. Thus, in both instances, the Creator is glorified in his works; and it is made to appear, that 'by him all things consist,' and that 'for his pleasure they are, and were created.' This seems a sufficient answer to any reasoning *a priori* against miracles, from their supposed inconsistency with the divine perfections."

The argument is, that as the known and established course of nature has been fixed by Him who is the Creator and Preserver of all things, it can never be violated, depart from, or controlled, but either immediately by himself, or immediately by other beings at his command, and by his assistance or permission; for if this be not allowed, we must deny either the divine omnipotence, or his natural government and, if these be allowed, the other follows. Every real miracle is a work of God, done specially by him, by his permission or with his concurrence.

In order to distinguish a real miracle, it is necessary that the common course of nature should be understood; for without some antecedent knowledge of the operation of physical causes, an event might be deemed miraculous which was merely strange, and through our ignorance inexplicable. Should an earthquake happen in a country never before visited by such a calamity within the memory of man, by the ignorance it might be considered miraculous; whereas an earthquake is a regular effect of the present established laws of nature.

But as the course of nature and the operation of physical causes are but partially understood, and will perhaps never be fully comprehended by the most inquiring minds, it seems necessary that such miracles as are intended to authenticate any religious system, promulged for the common benefit of mankind, should be effects produced upon subjects whose properties have been the subject of common and long observation; that it should be contrary to some known laws by which the objects in question have been uniformly and long observed to be governed; or that the proximate cause of the effect should be known to have no adequate power or adaptation to produce it. When these circumstances occur separately, and more especially when combined, a sufficient antecedent acquaintance with the course of nature exists to warrant the conclusion, that the effect is miraculous, or, in other words, that it is produced by the special interposition of God.

Whether the works ascribed to Moses and to Christ, as recorded in Scripture, were actually performed by them, will be considered in another place; but here it is proper

observe that, assuming their actual occurrence, they are of such a nature as to leave no reasonable doubt of their miraculous character : And from them we may borrow a few instances, for the sake of illustrating the preceding observations, without prejudging the argument.

The rod cast from the hand of Moses becomes a serpent. Here the subject was well known ; it was a rod, a branch separated from a tree ; and it was obviously contrary to the known and established course of nature that it should undergo so signal a transformation. If the fact can be proved, the miracle must, therefore, follow.

The sea is parted at the stretching out of the rod of Moses. Here is no adaptation of the proximate cause to produce the effect, which was obviously in opposition to the known qualities of water. A recession of the sea from the shores would have taken down the whole mass of water from the head of the gulf ; but here the waters divide, and, contrary to their nature, stand up on each side, leaving a passage for the host of Israel.

It is in the nature of clouds to be carried about by the wind ; but the cloud which went before the Israelites in the wilderness rested on their tabernacle, moved when they were commanded to march, and directed their course ; rested when they were to pitch their tents, and was a pillar of direction by day ; and by night, when it is the nature of clouds to become dark, the rays of the sun no longer permeating them, this cloud shone with the brightness of fire.

In all these cases, if the facts be established, there can be no doubt as to their miraculous character.

“ Were a physician instantly to give sight to a blind man, by anointing his eyes with a chemical preparation, to the nature and qualities of which we were absolute strangers, the cure would, to us, undoubtedly, be wonderful ; but we could not pronounce it miraculous, because it might be the physical effect of the operation of the unguent upon the eye : But were he to give sight to his patient merely by commanding him to receive it, or by anointing his eyes with spittle, we should, with the utmost confidence, pronounce the cure to be a miracle ; because we know perfectly, that neither the human

voice, nor human spittle, has, by the established constitution of things, any such power over the diseases of the eye. No one is ignorant that persons, apparently dead, are often restored to their families and friends by being treated, during suspended animation, in the manner recommended by the Humane Society. To the vulgar, and sometimes even to men of science, these resuscitations appear very wonderful; but as they are known to be effected by physical agency, they cannot be considered as miraculous deviations from the laws of nature. On the other hand, no one could doubt of his having witnessed a real miracle who had seen a person that had been four days dead come alive out of the grave at the call of another; or who had even beheld a person, exhibiting all the common evidences of death, instantly resuscitated merely by being desired to live.”*

In all such instances the common course of nature is sufficiently known to support the conclusion, that the power which thus interferes with and controls it, and produces effects to which the visible natural causes are known not to be adequate, is God.†

But it is also necessary, in order to prove that even these miraculous events are authentications of a divine mission, that a direct connexion between the power of God, exerted in a miraculous act, and the messenger, and his message, should be established.

The following circumstances would appear sufficiently to establish such a connexion :—1. When the miracles occur at the time when he who professes to have a divine mission from God is engaged in making known the will of God to mankind, by communicating the revelation he has received, and performing other acts connected with his office. 2. When, though

* Gleig's edition of Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, vol. iii., p. 241.

† It is observable that no miracles appear to have been wrought by human agency before the time of Moses and Aaron, in whose days, not only had the world long existed, but, consequently, the course of nature had been observed for a long period; and, further, these first miracles were wrought among a refined and observant people, who had their philosophers, to whom the course of nature, and the operation of physical causes, were subjects of keen investigation.

they are works above human power, they are wrought by the messenger himself, or follow his volitions. The force of this argument may be thus exhibited :—

When such unequivocal miracles as those we have pointed out occur only in connexion with an actual profession, by certain persons, that they have a divine authority to teach and command mankind, this is a strong presumption that the works are wrought by God, in order to authenticate this pretension ; but when they are performed mediately by these persons themselves, by their own will, and for the express purpose of establishing their mission, inasmuch as they are allowed to be real miracles, which no power but that of God can effect, it is then clear that God is with them, and that his co-operation is an authenticating and visible seal upon their commission.

It is not necessary, in this stage, to specify the rules by which real and pretended miracles are to be distinguished ; nor to inquire whether the Scriptures allow that, in some cases, miracles have been wrought in support of falsehood : Both these subjects will be examined when we come to speak of the miracles of Scripture. The ground established is, that miracles are possible ; and that, when real miracles occur under the circumstances we have mentioned, they are satisfactory evidences of a divine mission.

But though this should be allowed, and also that the eye-witnesses of such miracles would be bound to admit the proof, it has been made a question whether their testimony affords sufficient reason to others to admit the fact that such events actually took place, and, consequently, whether we are bound to acknowledge the authority of that mission, in attestation of which the miracles are said to have been wrought.

If this be admitted, the benefits of a revelation must be confined to those who witnessed its attestation by miracle, or similar attestations must be afforded to every individual ; for, as no revelation can be a benefit unless it possesses divine authority, which alone can infallibly mark the distinction between truth and error, should the authentication be partial, the benefit of the communication of an infallible doctrine must also be partial. We are all so much interested in this,

—because no religious system can plead the authentication of perpetual miracle,—that it deserves special consideration. Either this principle is unsound, or we must abandon all hope of discovering a religion of divine authority.

As miracles are facts, they, like other facts, may be reported to others; and—as in the case of the miracles in question, bearing the characters which have been described—the competency of any man of ordinary understanding to determine whether they were actually wrought cannot be doubted: If the witnesses are credible, it is reasonable that their testimony should be admitted; for if the testimony be such as, in matters of the greatest moment to us in the affairs of common life, we should not hesitate to act upon; if it be such that, in the most important affairs, men do uniformly act upon similar, or even weaker, testimony, it would be mere perverseness to reject it in the case in question, and would argue rather a disinclination to the doctrine which is thus proved, than any rational doubt of the sufficiency of the proof itself.

The objection is put in its strongest form by Mr. Hume, in his *Essays*, and the substance of it is: Experience is the ground of the credit we give to human testimony; but this experience is by no means constant, for we often find men prevaricate and deceive. On the other hand, it is experience, in like manner, which assures us of those laws of nature in the violation of which the notion of a miracle consists; but this experience is constant and uniform. A miracle is an event which, from its nature, is inconsistent with our experience; out the falsehood of testimony is not inconsistent with experience; it is contrary to experience that miracles should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false; and, therefore, no human testimony can, in any case, render them credible.

This argument has been met at large by many authors,* but the following extracts afford ample refutation:—

* See Campbell's *Dissertation on Miracles*; Price's *Four Dissertations*, diss. 4; Paley's *Evidences*; Adam's *Essay on Miracles*; Bishop Douglas's *Criterion*; Dwight's *Theology*, vol. ii.; Dr. Hey's *Norrisian Lectures*, vol. i.; Van Mildert's *Boyle's Lectures*, vol. i.

“The principle of this objection is, that it is contrary to experience that a miracle should be true, but not contrary to experience that testimony should be false.

“Now, there appears a small ambiguity in the term ‘experience,’ and in the phrases ‘contrary to experience,’ or ‘contradicting experience,’ which it may be necessary to remove, in the first place. Strictly speaking, the narrative of a fact is then only contrary to experience when the fact is related to have existed at a time and place, at which time and place we, being present, did not perceive it to exist ; as if it should be asserted that, in a particular room, and at a particular hour of a certain day, a man was raised from the dead ; in which room, and at the time specified, we, being present, and looking on, perceived no such event to have taken place.

“Here the assertion is contrary to experience, properly so called ; and this is a contrariety which no evidence can surmount : It matters nothing whether the fact be of a miraculous nature or not. But although this be the experience and the contrariety which Archbishop Tillotson alleged in the quotation with which Mr. Hume opens his Essay, it is certainly not that experience, nor that contrariety, which Mr. Hume himself intended to object. And, short of this, I know no intelligible signification which can be affixed to the term ‘contrary to experience,’ but one, namely, that of not having ourselves experienced any thing similar to the thing related, or such things not being generally experienced by others. I say ‘not generally ;’ for to state, concerning the fact in question, that no such thing was ever experienced, or that universal experience is against it, is to assume the subject of the controversy.

“Now, the improbability which arises from the want (for this properly is a want, not a contradiction) of experience, is only equal to the probability there is, that, if the thing were true, we should experience things similar to it, or that such things would be generally experienced. Suppose it then to be true, that miracles were wrought upon the first promulgation of Christianity, when nothing but miracles could decide its authority, is it certain that such miracles would be repeated so often, and in so many places, as to become objects of general

experience? Is it a probability approaching to certainty? Is it a probability of any great strength or force? Is it such as no evidence can encounter? And yet this probability is the exact converse, and therefore the exact measure, of the improbability which arises from the want of experience, and which Mr. Hume represents as invincible by human testimony.

“It is not like alleging a new law of nature, or a new experiment in natural philosophy; because when these are related, it is expected that, under the same circumstances, the same effect will follow universally; and in proportion as this expectation is justly entertained, the want of a corresponding experience negatives the history. But to expect concerning a miracle, that it should succeed upon a repetition, is to expect that which would make it cease to be a miracle, which is contrary to its nature as such, and would totally destroy the use and purpose for which it was wrought.

“The force of experience as an objection to miracles is founded in the presumption, either that the course of nature is invariable, or that, if it be ever varied, variations will be frequent and general. Has the necessity of this alternative been demonstrated? Permit us to call the course of nature the agency of an intelligent Being; and is there any good reason for judging this state of the case to be probable? Ought we not rather to expect, that such a Being, on occasions of peculiar importance, may interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that such occasions should return seldom; that these interruptions, consequently, should be confined to the experience of a few; that the want of it, therefore, in many, should be matter neither of surprise nor objection?

“But as a continuation of the argument from experience, it is said, that when we advance accounts of miracles, we assign effects without causes, or we attribute effects to causes inadequate to the purpose, or to causes, of the operation of which we have no experience. Of what causes, we may ask, and of what effects, does the objection speak? If it be answered, that when we ascribe the cure of the palsy to a touch, of blindness to the anointing of the eyes with clay, or the raising of the dead to a word, we lay ourselves open to this

imputation ; we reply, that we ascribe no such effects to such causes. We perceive no virtue or energy in these things, more than in other things of the same kind. They are merely signs, to connect the miracle with its end. The effect we ascribe simply to the volition of the Deity ; of whose existence and power, not to say of whose presence and agency, we have previous and independent proof. We have, therefore, all we seek for in the works of rational agents,—a sufficient power, and an adequate motive. In a word, once believe that there is a God, and miracles are not incredible !

“Mr. Hume states the case of miracles to be, a contest of opposite improbabilities ; that is to say, a question whether it be more improbable that the miracle should be true, or the testimony false ; and this I think a fair account of the controversy. But herein I remark a want of argumentative justice, that, in describing the improbability of miracles, he suppresses all those circumstances of extenuation which result from our knowledge of the existence, power, and disposition of the Deity ; his concern in the creation ; the end answered by the miracle, the importance of that end, and its subserviency to the plan pursued in the works of nature. As Mr. Hume has represented the question, miracles are alike incredible to him who is previously assured of the constant agency of a divine Being, and to him who believes that no such Being exists in the universe. They are equally incredible, whether related to have been wrought upon occasions the most deserving, and for purposes the most beneficial, or for no assignable end whatever, or for an end confessedly trifling or pernicious. This surely cannot be a correct statement. In adjusting also the other side of the balance, the strength and weight of testimony, this author has provided an answer to every possible accumulation of historical proof, by telling us that we are not obliged to explain how the story of the evidence arose. Now, I think that we are obliged ; not, perhaps, to show by positive accounts how it did, but by a probable hypothesis how it might, so happen. The existence of the testimony is a phenomenon ; the truth of the fact solves the phenomenon. If we reject this solution, we ought to have

some other to rest in ; and none, even by our adversaries, can be admitted, which is not consistent with the principles that regulate human affairs and human conduct at present, or which makes men then to have been a different kind of beings from what they are now.

“ But the short consideration which, independently of every other, convinces me that there is no solid foundation for Mr. Hume’s conclusion, is the following : When a theorem is proposed to a mathematician, the first thing he does with it is to try it upon a simple case, and if it produce a false result, he is sure that there is some mistake in the demonstration. Now, to proceed in this way with what may be called Mr. Hume’s theorem,—if twelve men, whose probity and good sense I had long known, should seriously and circumstantially relate to me an account of a miracle wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impossible that they should be deceived ; if the governor of the country, hearing a rumour of this account, should call these men into his presence, and offer them a short proposal, either to confess the imposture, or submit to be tied up to a gibbet ; if they should refuse with one voice to acknowledge that there existed any falsehood or imposture in the case ; if this threat were communicated to them separately, yet with no different effect ; if it was at last executed ; if I myself saw them, one after another, consenting to be racked, burnt, or strangled, rather than give up the truth of their account ; still, if Mr. Hume’s rule be my guide, I am not to believe them. Now, I undertake to say, that there exists not a sceptic in the world who would not believe them, or who would defend such incredulity.” *

“ The essayist,” says the Bishop of Landaff, “ who has most elaborately drawn out this argument, perplexes the subject, by attempting to adjust, in a sort of metaphysical balance of his own invention, the degrees of probability resulting from what he is pleased to call opposite experiences ; namely, the experience of men’s veracity, on the one hand, and the experience of the firm and unalterable constitution of the laws of nature,

* *Paley’s Evidences, Preparatory Considerations.*

on the other. But the fallacy in this mode of reasoning is obvious. For, in the first place, miracles can, at most, only be contrary to the experience of those who never saw them performed : To say, therefore, that they are contrary to general experience, (including, as it should seem, the experience even of those who profess to have seen and to have examined them,) is to assume the very point in question. And, in the next place, it is equally fallacious to allege against them, the experience of the unalterable constitution of the laws of nature ; because, unless the fact be previously investigated, whether those laws have ever been altered or suspended, this is likewise a gratuitous assumption.

“ In truth, this boasted balance of probabilities could only be employed with effect, in the cause of infidelity, by counterpoising, against the testimony of those who professed to have seen miracles, the testimony of those (if any such were to be found) who, under the circumstances, and with the same opportunities of forming a judgment, professed to have been convinced, that the things which they saw were not miracles, but mere impostures and delusions. Here would be indeed experience against experience ; and a sceptic might be well employed in estimating the comparative weight of the testimony on either side, in order to judge of the credibility or incredibility of the things proposed to his belief. But when he weighs only the experience of those to whom the opportunity of judging of a miracle by personal observation has never been afforded, against the experience of those who declare themselves to be eye-witnesses of the fact ; instead of opposite experiences, properly so called, he is only balancing total inexperience on the one hand, against positive experience on the other.

“ Nor will it avail any thing to say, that this particular inexperience of those who have never seen miracles, is compensated by their general experience of the unalterable course of nature. For, as we have already observed, this is altogether a mere *petitio principii*. It is arguing, upon a supposition wholly incapable of proof, that the course of nature is indeed so unalterably fixed, that even God himself, by whom its laws were ordained, cannot, when he sees fit, suspend their operation.

“ There is therefore a palpable fallacy, (however a subtle metaphysician may attempt to disguise it by ingenious sophistry,) in representing the experience of mankind as being opposite to the testimony on which our belief of miracles is founded. For the opposite experiences, as they are called, are not contradictory to each other ; since ‘ there is ’ (as has been justly observed) ‘ no inconsistency in believing them both.’ A miracle necessarily supposes an established and generally unaltered (though not unalterable) course of things ; for, in its interception of such a course lies the very essence of a miracle, as here understood. Our experience, therefore, of the course of nature, leads us to expect its continuance, and to act accordingly ; but it does not set aside any proofs, from valid testimony, of a deviation from it ; neither can our being personally unacquainted with a matter of fact which took place a thousand years ago, or in a distant part of the world, warrant us in disbelieving the testimony of personal witnesses of the fact. Common sense revolts at the absurdity of considering one man’s ignorance or inexperience as a counterpoise to another man’s knowledge and experience of a matter of fact. Yet on no better foundation does this favourite argument of infidels appear to rest.”

The substance of Dr. Campbell’s answer to Mr. Hume’s argument has been thus given :—

“ The evidence arising from human testimony is not solely derived from experience ; on the contrary, testimony has a natural influence on belief, antecedent to experience. The early and unlimited assent given to testimony by children, gradually contracts as they advance in life ; it is therefore more consonant to truth to say, that our diffidence in testimony is the result of experience, than that our faith in it has this foundation. Besides, the uniformity of experience in favour of any fact is not a proof against its being reversed in particular instance. The evidence arising from the single testimony of a man of known veracity, will go farther to establish a belief of its being actually reversed. If his testimony be confirmed by a few others of the same character, we cannot withhold our assent to the truth of it. Now, though

the operations of nature are governed by uniform laws, and though we have not the testimony of our senses in favour of any violation of them; still, if in particular instances we have the testimony of thousands of our fellow-creatures, and those, too, men of strict integrity, swayed by no motives of ambition or interest, and governed by the principles of common sense, that they were actually witnesses of these violations, the constitution of our nature obliges us to believe them.

“ Mr. Hume’s reasoning is founded upon too limited a view of the laws and course of nature. If we consider things duly, we shall find that lifeless matter is utterly incapable of obeying any laws or of being endued with any powers; and, therefore, what is usually called the course of nature can be nothing else than the arbitrary will and pleasure of God, acting continually upon matter according to certain rules of uniformity, still bearing a relation to contingencies. So that it is as easy for the supreme Being to alter what men think the course of nature, as to preserve it. Those effects, which are produced on the world regularly and indelibly, and which are usually termed the works of nature, prove the constant providence of the Deity; those, on the contrary, which, upon any extraordinary occasion, are produced in such a manner as it is manifest could not have been either by human power, or by what is called chance, prove undeniably the immediate interposition of the Deity on that especial occasion. God, it must be recollected, is the Governor of the moral as well as of the physical world; and since the moral well-being of the universe is of more consequence than its physical order and regularity, it follows obviously, that the laws, conformably with which the material world seems generally to be regulated, are subservient and may occasionally yield to the laws by which the moral world is governed. Although, therefore, a miracle is contrary to the usual course of nature, (and would indeed lose its beneficial effect if it were not so,) it cannot thence be inferred, that it is ‘a violation of the laws of nature,’ allowing the term to include a regard to moral tendencies. The laws by which a wise and holy God governs the world,

cannot (unless he is pleased to reveal them) be learned in any other way than from testimony; since, on this supposition, nothing but testimony can bring us acquainted with the whole series of his dispensations; and this kind of knowledge is absolutely necessary previously to our correctly inferring those laws. Testimony, therefore, must be admitted as constituting the principal means of discovering the real laws by which the universe has been regulated; that testimony assures us, that the apparent course of nature has often been interrupted to produce important moral effects; and we must not at random disregard such testimony, because in estimating its credibility we ought to look almost infinitely more at the moral than at the physical circumstances connected with any particular event." *

* It would be singular, did we not know the inconsistencies of error, that Hume himself, as Dr. Campbell shows, gives up his own argument.

"I own," these are his words, "there may possibly be miracles, or violations of the usual course of nature, of such a kind as to admit a proof from human testimony, though perhaps" [in this he is modest enough, he avers nothing; *perhaps*] "it will be impossible to find any such in all the records of history." To this declaration he subjoins the following supposition:—"Suppose all authors, in all languages, agree that from the 1st of January, 1600, there was a total darkness over the whole earth for eight days; suppose that the tradition of this extraordinary event is still strong and lively among the people; that all travellers, who return from foreign countries, bring us accounts of the same traditions, without the least variation or contradiction; it is evident that our present philosophers, instead of doubting of that fact, ought to receive it for certain, and ought to search for the causes whence it might be derived." Could one imagine that the person who had made the above acknowledgment, a person too who is justly allowed by all who are acquainted with his writings to possess uncommon penetration and philosophical abilities,—that this were the same individual who had so short a while before affirmed, that "a miracle" or a violation of the course of nature, "supported by any human testimony, is more properly a subject of derision than of argument?"

The objection, "that successive testimony diminishes, and that so rapidly as to command no assent after a few centuries at most," deserves not so full a refutation; since it is evident, that "testimony continues credible so long as it is transmitted with all those circumstances and conditions which first procured it a certain degree of credit among men. Who complains of a decay of evidence in relation to the actions of Alexander, Hannibal, Pompey, or Cæsar? We never hear persons wishing they had lived ages earlier, that they might have had better proof that Cyrus was the conqueror of Babylon;

Such evidence as that of miracles, transmitted to distant times by satisfactory testimony, a revelation may then receive. The fitness of this kind of evidence to render that revelation an instant and universal benefit, wherever it comes, is equally apparent ; for, as Mr. Locke observes,* “ The bulk of mankind have not leisure nor capacity for demonstration, nor can they carry a train of proofs ; but as to the worker of miracles, all his commands become principles, there needs no other proof of what he says, but that he said it ; and there needs no more than to read the inspired books to be instructed.”

Having thus shown, that miracles are possible ; that, under certain circumstances, their reality may be ascertained ; that, when accompanied by other circumstances which we have also mentioned, they are connected with a definite end, and connect themselves with the divine mission of those who perform them, and with the truth of their doctrine ; that, as facts, they are the subjects of human testimony, and that credible testimony respecting them lays a competent foundation for our belief in them, and in those revelations which they are clearly designed to attest ;—the way is prepared for the consideration of the miracles recorded in Scripture.

Prophecy is the other great branch of the external evidence of a revelation ; and the nature and force of that kind of evidence may fitly be pointed out before either the miracles or prophecies of the Bible are examined ; for, by ascertaining the general principles on which this kind of evidence rests, the consideration of particular cases will be rendered more easy and satisfactory.

No argument *à priori* against the possibility of prophecy can be attempted by any one who believes in the existence and infinitely-perfect nature of God.

The infidel author of *The Moral Philosopher*, indeed, rather insinuates than attempts fully to establish a dilemma with which to perplex those who regard prophecy as one of the

that Darius was beaten in several battles by Alexander,” &c.—See Dr. A. GREGORY’S *Letters on the Christian Revelation*, vol. i., p. 196.

* Reasonableness of Christianity.

proofs of a divine revelation. He thinks that either prophecy must respect "events necessary, as depending upon necessary causes, which might be certainly foreknown and predicted;" or that, if human actions are free, and effects contingent, the possibility of prophecy must be given up, as it implies foreknowledge, which, if granted, would render them necessary.

The first part of this objection would be allowed, were there no predictions to be adduced in favour of a professed revelation, except such as related to events which human experience has taught to be dependent upon some cause, the existence and necessary operation of which are within the compass of human knowledge. But to foretel such events would not be to prophesy, any more than to say, that it will be light to-morrow at noon, or that on a certain day and hour next year there will occur an eclipse of the sun or moon, when that event has been previously ascertained by astronomical calculation.

If, however, it were allowed, that all events depended upon a chain of necessary causes, yet, in a variety of instances, the argument from prophecy would not be at all affected; for the foretelling of necessary results in certain circumstances is beyond human intelligence, because they can only be known to Him by whose power those necessary causes on which they depend have been arranged, and who has prescribed the times of their operation. To borrow a case, for the sake of illustration, from the Scriptures, though the claims of their predictions are not now in question: Let us allow that such a prophecy as that of Isaiah respecting the taking of Babylon by Cyrus was uttered, as it purports to be, more than a century before Cyrus was born, and that all the actions of Cyrus and his army, and those of the Babylonian Monarch and his people, were necessitated; is it to be maintained, that the chain of necessitating causes, running through more than a century, could be traced by a human mind, so as to describe the precise manner in which that fatality would unfold itself, even to the turning of the river, the drunken carousal of the inhabitants, and the neglect of shutting the gates of the city? This being by uniform and universal experience known to be above all human

apprehension, would therefore prove that the prediction was made in consequence of a communication from a superior and divine Intelligence. Were events, therefore, subjected to invincible fate and necessity, there might, nevertheless, be prophecy.

The other branch of the dilemma is founded on the notion that, if we allow the moral freedom of human actions, prophecy is impossible, because certain foreknowledge is contrary to that freedom, and fixes and renders the event necessary.

To this the reply is, that the objection is founded on a false assumption, the divine foreknowledge having no more influence in effectuating, or making certain, any event than human foreknowledge, in the degree in which it may exist; there being no moral causality at all in knowledge. This lies in the will, which is the determining acting principle in every agent; or, as Dr. Samuel Clarke has expressed it, in answer to another kind of objector, "God's infallible judgment concerning contingent truths does no more alter the nature of the things, and cause them to be necessary, than our judging right at any time concerning a contingent truth makes it cease to be contingent; or than our science of a present truth is any cause of its being either true or present. Here, therefore, lies the fallacy of our author's argument: Because from God's foreknowing the existence of things depending upon a chain of necessary causes, it follows that the existence of the things must needs be necessary; therefore, from God's judging infallibly concerning things which depend not on necessary, but free, causes, he concludes that these things also depend not upon free, but necessary, causes; contrary, I say, to the supposition in the argument; for it must not be first supposed that things are, in their own nature, necessary; but, from the power of judging infallibly concerning free events, it must be proved that things otherwise supposed free will thereby unavoidably become necessary." The whole question lies in this: Is the simple knowledge of an action a necessitating cause of the action? And the answer must be in the negative, as every man's consciousness will assure him. If the causality of influence—either immediate or by the arrange-

ment of compelling events—be mixed up with this, the ground is shifted, and it is no longer a question which respects simple prescience.*

This metaphysical objection having no foundation in truth, the force of the evidence arising from predictions of events, distant, and out of the power of human sagacity to anticipate, and uttered as authentications of a divine commission, is apparent. “Such predictions, whether in the form of declaration, description, or representation of things future,” as Mr. Boyle justly observes, “are supernatural things, and may properly be ranked among miracles.”* For when, for instance, the events are distant many years or ages from the uttering of the prediction itself, depending on causes not so much as existing when the prophecy was spoken and recorded, and likewise upon various circumstances, and a long arbitrary series of things, and the fluctuating uncertainties of human volitions, and especially when they depend not at all upon any external circumstances, nor upon any created being, but arise merely from the counsels and appointment of God himself, such events can be foreknown only by that Being one of whose attributes is Omniscience, and can be foretold by him only to whom the Father of Lights shall reveal them ; so that whoever is manifestly endued with that predictive power must, in that instance, speak and act by divine inspiration, and what he pronounces of that kind must be received as the word of God ; nothing more being necessary to assure us of this than credible testimony that such predictions were uttered before the event, or conclusive evidence that the records which contain them are of the antiquity to which they pretend.†

* Boyle’s *Christian Virtuoso*.

† Vide Chapman’s *Eusebius*, p. 158 ; Cudworth’s *Intellect. Syst.*, p. 866 ; Vitrina in *Isai.* xli.

CHAPTER X.

The Evidences necessary to authenticate a Revelation:—Internal Evidence—Collateral Evidence.

THE second kind of evidence usually considered as necessary for the attestation of a divine revelation is called “internal evidence.”

This kind of evidence has been already described to be that which arises from the consideration of the doctrines taught, as being consistent with the character of God, and tending to promote the virtue and happiness of man ; the ends for which a revelation of the will of God was needed, and for which it must have been given, if it be considered as an act of grace and mercy.

This subject, like the two branches of the external evidence,—miracles and prophecy,—involves important general principles ; and it may require to be the more carefully considered, as opinions have run into extremes. By some it has been doubted whether what is called the “internal evidence”—that is, the excellence of the doctrines and tendency of a revelation—ought to be ranked with the leading evidence of miracles and prophecy, seeing that the proof from miracles and from prophecy is decisive and absolute. For the same reason, however, prophecy might be excluded from the rank of leading evidence, inasmuch as miracles of themselves are, in their evidence, decisive and absolute. If, however, it were contended that proofs from miracles, prophecy, and internal evidence are jointly necessary to constitute sufficient proof of the truth of a revelation, there would be reason to dispute the position, understanding by “sufficient evidence” that degree of proof which would render it highly unreasonable, perverse, and culpable in any one to reject the authority of the revelation. This evidence is afforded by miracles alone ; for if there be any force

at all in the argument from miracles, it goes to the full length of rational proof of a divine attestation, and that both to him who personally witnesses the performance of a real miracle, and to him to whom it is credibly testified ; and nothing more is absolutely necessary to enforce a rational conviction. But if it should please the divine Author of a revelation to super-add the further evidence of prophecy, and also that of the obvious truth and beneficial tendency of many parts of this revelation,—circumstances which must necessarily be often apparent,—it ought not to be disregarded in the argument in its favour, nor thought of trifling import ; since, though it may not be necessary to establish a rational and sufficient proof, it may have a secondary necessity,—to arouse attention, to leave objectors more obviously without excuse, and also to accommodate the revelation to that variety which exists in the mental constitutions of men, one mind being excited to attention and disposed to conviction more forcibly by one species of proof than by another.

In strict propriety, therefore, miracles may be considered as the primary evidence of the truth of a revelation, and every other species of proof as confirmatory. Prophecy and the internal evidence are leading evidences, but neither of them stands in the foremost place. The same abundance of proof we perceive in nature for the demonstration of the being and attributes of God. Proofs of the existence of a First Cause, almighty and infinitely wise, more than what is logically sufficient, surround us everywhere ; but who can doubt that if half the instances of infinite power and wisdom which are seen in the material universe were annihilated, there would not be sufficient evidence to demonstrate both these, as perfections of the Maker of the universe ?

On the other hand, the proof drawn from the internal evidence has, by others, been placed first in order ; and the force of the evidence from miracles and prophecy is, by them, made to depend upon the excellence of the doctrine which they are brought forward to confirm, and which ought first to be ascertained. Nothing, say they, is to be received as a revelation from God which does not contain doctrines worthy of the

divine character, and tending to promote the good of mankind. "A necessary mark of a religion coming from God is, that the duties it enjoins are all such as are agreeable to our natural notions of God, and perfective of the nature, and conducive to the happiness, of man."*

Now, though it must be instantly granted that, in a revelation from God, there will be nothing contrary to his own character; and that, when it is made in the way of a merciful dispensation, it will contain nothing but what tends to perfect the nature, and promote the happiness, of his creatures; it is clear that, to try a professed revelation by our own notions as to what is worthy of God and beneficial to mankind, is to assume that, independent of a revelation, we know what God is, or we cannot say what is worthy or unworthy of him; and that we know, too, the character, and relations, and wants of man so perfectly, as to determine what is beneficial to him: In other words, this supposes that we are in circumstances not greatly to need supernatural instruction.

Another objection to the internal evidence being made the primary test of a revelation is, that it renders the external testimony nugatory, or comparatively unimportant. "Surely," observes a late ingenious writer, "in a system which purports to be a revelation from heaven, and to contain a history of God's dealings with men, and to develope truths with regard to the moral government of the universe, the knowledge and belief of which will lead to happiness here and hereafter, we may expect to find (if its pretensions are well founded) an evidence for its truth, which shall be independent of all external testimony."† If this be true, the utility of the evidence of miracles is rendered very questionable. It is either unnecessary, or it is subordinate and dependent; neither of which, by Christian Divines at least, can be consistently maintained. The non-necessity of miracles cannot be asserted by them, because they believe them to have been actually performed; and that they are subordinate proofs, and dependent upon the sufficiency of the internal evidence, is contradicted

* Dr. S. Clarke.

† Erskine, On the Internal Evidence, &c.

by the whole tenor of the Scriptures, which represent them as being in themselves an absolute demonstration of the mission and doctrine of the Prophets, at whose instance they were performed, and never direct us to regard their doctrines as a test of the miracles. The miracles of Christ, in particular, were a demonstration, not a partial and conditional, but a complete and absolute demonstration, of his mission from God; and "it may be observed, with respect to all the miracles of the New Testament, that their divinity, considered in themselves, is always either expressly asserted, or manifestly implied; and they are accordingly urged as a decisive and absolute proof of the divinity of the doctrine and testimony of those who perform them, without ever taking into consideration the nature of the doctrine, or of the testimony to be confirmed."

Against this mode of stating the internal evidence, there lies also this logical objection, that it is arguing in a circle; the miracles are proved by the doctrine, and then the doctrine by the miracles; an objection, from which those who have adopted the notion either of the superior or the co-ordinate rank of the internal evidence, have not, with all their ingenuity and effort, fairly escaped.

Miracles must, therefore, be considered as the leading and absolute evidence of a revelation from God; and "what to me," says a sensible writer, "is *à priori* a strong argument of their being so, is the manifest inconsistency of the other hypotheses with the very condition of that people for whose sake God should raise up at any time his extraordinary messengers, endued with such miraculous powers. For if God ever favours mankind with such a special revelation of his will, and instructions from heaven, in a way supernatural, it is certainly in that unhappy juncture when the principles and practices of mankind are so miserably depraved and corrupted, as to want the light and assistance of revelation extremely, and are, humanly speaking, utterly incorrigible without it. Now, to say that, in these particular circumstances, men are not to depend on any real miracles, but, before they admit them as evidence of the Prophet's divine mission, they must carefully examine his doctrine, to see if it be perfectly good and true, is

either to suppose these people furnished with principles and knowledge requisite for that purpose, contrary, point-blank, to the real truth of their case ; or else it is to assert, that they who are utterly destitute of principles and knowledge requisite for that work must, nevertheless, undertake it without them, and judge of the truth of the Prophet's doctrine and authority by their false principles of religion and morality ; which, in short, is to fix them immovably where they are already, in old erroneous principles, against any new and true ones that should be offered. Especially with the bulk of mankind, full of darkness and prejudice, this must unavoidably be the consequence ; and the more they wanted a reformation in principle, the less capable would they be of receiving it in this method. Thus, for instance, were a teacher sent from heaven, with signs and wonders, to a nation of idolaters, and they previously instructed to regard no miracles of his whatsoever, till they were fully satisfied of the goodness of his doctrine, it is easy to foresee by what rule they would prove his doctrine, and what success he would meet with amongst them. Add to this, what is likewise exceedingly material, the great delays and perplexities attending this way of proceeding. For if every article of doctrine must be discussed and scanned by every person to whom it is offered, what slow advances would be made by a divine revelation among such a people ! Hundreds would probably be cut off before they came to the end of their queries, and the prophet might grow decrepit with age before he gained twenty proselytes in a nation." *

It is easy to discover the causes which have led to these mistakes, as to the true office of the internal evidence of a divine revelation.

In the first place, an hypothetic case has been assumed, and it has been asked, " If a doctrine absurd and wicked should be attested by miracles, is it to be admitted as divine, upon their authority ? " The answer is, that this is a case which cannot in the nature of things occur, and cannot, therefore, be made the basis of an argument. We have seen already, that

* Chapman's Eusebius.

a real miracle can be wrought by none but God, or by his commission, because the contrary supposition would exclude him from the government of the world which he has made and preserves. Whenever a real miracle takes place, therefore, in attestation of any doctrine, that doctrine cannot be either unreasonable or impious ; and if it should appear so to us, after the reality of the miracle is ascertained, which is not probable ordinarily, our judgment must be erroneous. The miracle proves the doctrine, or the ground on which miracles are allowed to have any force of evidence at all, either supreme or subordinate, absolute or dependent, must be given up ; for their evidence consists in this,—that they are the works of God.

The second cause of the error has been, that the rational evidence of the truths contained in a revelation has been confounded with the authenticating evidence. When once an exhibition of the character, plans, and laws of God is made, though in their nature totally undiscoverable by human faculties, they carry to the reason of man, so far as they are of a nature to be comprehended by it, the demonstration which accompanies truth of any other kind. For as the eye is formed to receive light, the rational powers of man are formed to receive conviction when the congruity of propositions is made evident. This is rational, but it is not authenticating, evidence. Let us suppose that there is no external testimony of miracles or prophecy, vouchsafed to attest that the teacher through whom we receive those doctrines which appear to us so sublime, so important, so true, received them from God, with a mission to impart them to us. He himself has no means of knowing them to be from God, or of distinguishing them from some happy train of thought, into which his mind has been carried by its own force ; nor if he had, have we any means of concluding that they are more than the opinions of a mind, superior in vigour and grasp to our own. They may be true, but they are not attested to be divine. We have no guarantee of their infallible truth, because our own rational powers are not infallible, nor those of the most gifted human mind. Add, then, the external testimony, and we have the

attestation required. The rational evidence of the doctrine is the same in both cases ; but the rational evidence, though to us it is as far, and only as far, as we can claim infallibility for our judgment, the proof of the truth of the doctrine, is no proof at all that God has revealed it. In the external testimony alone that proof is found ; the degree of rational evidence we have of the truth and excellency of the doctrine may be a further commendation of it to us, but it is no part of its authority.

From this distinction, the relative importance of the external and the internal evidence of a revelation may be further illustrated. Rational evidence of the doctrines proposed to us, when it can be had, goes to establish their truth, so far as we can depend upon our judgment ; but the external testimony, if satisfactory, establishes their divine authority, and therefore their absolute truth, and leaves us no appeal. Still further, a revelation, dependent upon internal evidence only, could contain no doctrines, and enjoin no duties, but those of which the evidence to our reason should be complete. The least objection grounded on a plausible contrary reason would weaken their force ; and the absence of a clear perception of their congruity with some previous principles, admitted as true, would be the absence of all evidence of their truth whatever. On the other hand, a revelation, with rational proof of a divine attestation, renders our instruction in many doctrines and duties possible, the rational evidence of whose truth is wanting ; and as some doctrines may be true, and highly important to us, which are not capable of this kind of proof, that is, which are not so fully known as to be compared with any received propositions, and determined by them, our knowledge is, in this way, greatly enlarged ; the benefits of revelation are extended ; and the whole becomes obligatory, and therefore efficient to moral purposes, because it bears upon it the seal of an infallible authority.

The firmer ground on which a revelation, founded upon reasonable external proof of authority, rests, is also obvious. The doctrines in which we need to be instructed are, the nature of God, our own relations to that invisible Being, his

will concerning us, the means of obtaining or securing his favour, the principles of his government, and a future life. These and others of a similar kind involve great difficulties, as the history of moral knowledge among mankind sufficiently proves ; and that, not only among those who never had the benefits of the biblical revelation on these subjects, but among those who, not considering it as an authority, have indulged the philosophizing spirit, and judged of these doctrines merely by their rational evidence. This, from the nature of things, appearing under different views to different minds, has produced almost as much contrariety of opinion among them, as we find among the sages of pagan antiquity. The mere rational proof of the truth of such doctrines being therefore, from its nature, in many important respects, obscure, and liable to diversity of opinion, would lay but a very precarious and shifting foundation for faith in any revelation from God suited to remove the ignorance of man on points so important in doctrine, and so essential to an efficient religion and morality.

On the other hand, the process of obtaining a rational proof of the divine attestation of a doctrine, by miracles for instance, is of the most simple and decisive kind, and gives to unbelief the character of obvious perverseness and inconsistency : Perverseness, because there is a clear opposition of the will, rather than of the judgment, in the case ; inconsistency, because a much lower degree of evidence is, by the very objectors, acted upon in their most important concerns in life. For who that saw the dead raised to life, in an appeal to the Lord of life, in confirmation of a doctrine professing to be taught by his authority, but must, unless wilful perverseness interposed, acknowledge a divine testimony ? And who that heard the fact reported on the testimony of honest men and competent observers, under circumstances in which no illusion can take place, but must be charged with inconsistency, should he treat the report with scepticism, when, upon the same kind and quantum of evidence, he would so credit any report as to his own affairs, as to risk the greatest interests upon it ? In difficult doctrines, of a kind to give rise to a variety of opi-

ons, the rational evidence is accompanied with doubt ; in
 ch a case as that of the miracle we have supposed, it rests
 principles supported by the universal and constant expe-
 nce of mankind : 1. That the raising of the dead is above
 man power : 2. That men, unquestionably virtuous in every
 her respect, are not likely to propagate a deliberate false-
 od : And, 3. That it contradicts all the known motives to
 tion in human nature, that they should do so, not only
 thout advantage, but at the hazard of reproach, persecution,
 d death. The evidence of such an attestation is, therefore,
 indubitable as these principles themselves.

The fourth kind of evidence, by which a revelation from
 d may be confirmed, is the collateral ; on which at present
 need not say more than adduce some instances, merely to
 strate this kind of testimony.

The collateral evidence of a revelation from God may be, its
 reement in principle with every former revelation, should
 evous revelations have been vouchsafed ; that it was
 viously suited to the circumstances of the world at the time
 its communication ; that it is adapted to effect the great
 ral ends which it purposes, and has actually effected them ;
 at if it contain a record of facts as well as of doctrines, those
 storical facts agree with the credible traditions and histories
 the same times ; that monuments, either natural or insti-
 ted, remain to attest the truth of its history ; that adver-
 saries have made concessions in its favour ; and that, should it
 fess to be a universal and ultimate revelation of the will
 d mercy of God to man, it maintains its adaptation to the
 se of the human race, and its efficiency, to the present day.
 hese, and many other circumstances, may be ranked under
 e head of collateral evidence ; and some of them will, in
 eir proper place, be applied to the holy Scriptures.

CHAPTER XI.

The Use and Limitation of Reason in Religion.

HAVING pointed out the kind of evidence by which a revelation from God may be authenticated, and the circumstances under which it ought to produce conviction and enforce obedience, it appears to be a natural order of proceeding to consider the subject of the title of this chapter ; inasmuch as evidence of this kind, and for this end, must be addressed to our reason, the only faculty which is capable of receiving it. But as important limitations and rules must be assigned to this office of our reason, it will be requisite to adduce and explain them.

The present argument being supposed to be with one who believes in a God, the Lord and Governor of man ; and that he is a Being of infinite perfections ; our observations will have the advantage of certain first principles which that belief concedes.

We have already adduced much presumptive evidence, that a revelation of the will of God is essential to his moral government, and that such a revelation has actually been made. We have also further considered the kind and degree of evidence which is necessary to ratify it. The means by which a conviction of its truth is produced, is the point before us.

The subject to be examined is the truth of a religious and moral system professing to be from God, though communicated by men, who plead his authority for its promulgation. If there be any force in the preceding observations, we are not, in the first instance, to examine the doctrine, in order to determine from our own opinion of its excellence whether it be from God, (for to this, if we need a revelation, we are incompetent,) but we are to inquire into the credentials of the

messengers, in quest of sufficient proof that God hath spoken to mankind by them. Should a slight consideration of the doctrine, either by its apparent excellence, or the contrary, attract us strongly to this examination, it is well; but whatever prejudices, for or against the doctrine, a report, or a hasty opinion, of its nature and tendency may inspire, our final judgment can only safely rest upon the proof which may be afforded of its divine authority. If that be satisfactory, the case is determined, whether the doctrine be pleasing or displeasing to us. If sufficient evidence be not afforded, we are at liberty to receive or reject the whole or any part of it, as it may appear to us to be worthy of our regard; for it then stands on the same ground as any other merely human opinion. We are, however, to be aware that this is done upon a very solemn responsibility.

The proof of the divine authority of a system of doctrine, communicated under such circumstances, is addressed to our reason; or, in other words, it must be reasonable proof that in this revelation there has been a direct and special interposition of God.

On the principles therefore already laid down, that, though the rational evidence of a doctrine lies in the doctrine itself, the rational proof of the divine authority of a doctrine must be external to that doctrine; and that miracles and prophecy are appropriate and satisfactory attestations of such an authority whenever they occur; the use of human reason in this inquiry is apparent: The alleged miracles themselves are to be examined, to determine whether they are real or pretended, allowing them to have been performed; the testimony of witnesses is to be investigated, to determine whether they actually occurred; and if this testimony has been put on record, we have also to determine whether the record was at first faithfully made, and whether it has been carefully and uncorruptedly preserved. With respect to prophecy we are also to examine, whether the professed prophecy be a real prediction of future events, or only an ambiguous and equivocal saying, capable of being understood in various ways; whether it relates to events which lie beyond the guess of wise

and observing men ; whether it was uttered so long before the events predicted, that they could not be anticipated in the usual order of things ; whether it was publicly or privately uttered ; and whether, if put on record, that record has been faithfully kept. To these points must our consideration be directed ; and to ascertain the strength of the proof is the important province of our reason or judgment.

The second use of reason respects the interpretation of the revelation thus authenticated ; and here the same rules are to be applied as in the interpretation of any other statement or record ; for as our only object, after the authenticity of the revelation is established, is to discover its sense, or, in other words, to ascertain what is declared unto us therein by God, our reason or judgment is called to precisely the same office as when the meaning of any other document is in question. The terms of the record are to be taken in their plain and commonly-received sense ; figures of speech are to be interpreted with reference to the local peculiarities of the country in which the agents who wrote the record resided ; idioms are to be understood according to the genius of the language employed ; if any allegorical or mystical discourses occur, the key to them must be sought in the book itself, and not in our own fancies ; what is obscure must be interpreted by that which is plain ; the scope and tenor of a discourse must be regarded, and no conclusion formed on passages detached from their context, except they are complete in their sense, or evidently intended as axioms and apophthegms. These, and other rules, which respect the time and place when the record was written ; the circumstances of the writer, and of those to whom he immediately addressed himself ; local customs, &c., appear in this and all other cases so just and reasonable as to commend themselves to every sober man ; and we rightly use our reason in the interpretation of a received revelation, when we conduct our inquiries into its meaning by those plain and common-sense rules which are adopted by all mankind when the meaning of other writings is to be ascertained.

It has been added, as a rule of interpretation, that, when a revelation is sufficiently attested, and, in consequence of that

admitted, nothing is to be deduced from it which is contrary to reason. As this rule is liable to be greatly misunderstood, and has sometimes been pushed to injurious consequences, we shall consider it at some length, and point out the sense in which it may be safely admitted.

Some persons who advocate this principle of interpretation appear to confound the reason of man with the reason or nature of things, and the relations which subsist among them. These, however, can be known fully to God alone; and to use the term "reason" in this sense is the same as to use it in the sense of the reason of God,—to an equality with which human reason cannot aspire. It may be the reverse of divine reason, or a faint radiation from it; but never can it be full and perfect as the reason of a mind of perfect knowledge. It is admitted that nothing can be revealed by God as truth contradictory of his knowledge, and of the nature of things themselves; but it follows not from this that nothing should be contained in that revelation contradictory of the limited and often erring reason of man.*

Another distinction necessary to be made, in order to the right application of this rule, is, that a doctrine which cannot be proved by our reason is not, on that account, contrary either to the nature of things, or even to reason itself. This is sometimes lost sight of, and that which has no evidence from our reason is hastily presumed to be against it. Now, rational investigation is a process by which we inquire into the

* "It is the error of those who contend that all necessary truth is discoverable or demonstrable by reason, that they affirm of human reason in particular, what is only true of reason in general, or of reason in the abstract. To say that whatever is true must be either discoverable or demonstrable by reason, can only be affirmed of an all-perfect reason; and is, therefore, predicated of none but the divine intellect. So that unless it can be shown that human reason is the same in degree, as well as in kind, with divine reason,—that is, commensurate with it as to its powers, and equally incapable of error,—the inference from reason in the abstract to human reason, is manifestly inconclusive. Nothing more is necessary to show the fallacy of this mode of arguing, than to urge the indisputable truth, that God is wiser than man, and has endued man with only a portion of that faculty which he himself, and none other besides him, possesses in absolute perfection."—VAN MILDERT'S *Sermons at Boyle's Lecture*.

truth or falsehood of any thing by comparing it with what we intuitively or by experience know to be true, or with that which we have formerly demonstrated to be so. "By reason," says Cicero, "we are led from things apprehended and understood to things not apprehended." Rational proof, therefore, consists in the agreement or disagreement of that which is compared with truths already supposed to be established. But there may be truths the evidence of which can only be fully known to the divine mind, and on which the reasoning or comparing faculty of an inferior nature cannot, from their vastness or obscurity, be employed; and such truths there must be in any revelation which treats of the nature and perfections of God, his will as to us, and the relations we stand in to him and to another state of being. As facts and doctrines, they are as much capable of revelation as if the whole reason of things on which they are grounded were put into the revelation also; but they may be revealed as authoritative declarations, of which the process of proof is hidden, either because it transcends our faculties, or for other reasons; and we have, therefore, no rational evidence of their truth further than we have rational evidence that they come from God; which is, in fact, a more powerful demonstration. That a revelation may contain truths of this transcendent nature, must be allowed by all who have admitted its necessity, if they would be consistent with themselves; for its necessity rests, in great part, upon the weakness of human reason. If our natural faculties could have reached the truths thus exhibited to us, there had been no need of supernatural instruction; and if it has been vouchsafed, the degree depends upon the divine will, and he may give a doctrine with its reasons, or without them; for surely the ground of our obligation to believe his word does not rest upon our perception of the rational evidence of the truths he requires us to believe. If doctrines, then, be given without the reasons on which they rest, that is, without any apparent agreement with what is already known,—because the process of proof must, in many cases, be a comparison of that which is too vast to be fully apprehended by us with something else which, because known

by us, must be comparatively little, or, perhaps, in some of its qualities or relations, of a different nature, so that no fit comparison of things so dissimilar can be instituted,—this circumstance proves the absence of rational evidence to us ; but it by no means follows that the doctrine is incapable of rational proof, though, probably, no reason but that of God, or of a more exalted being than man in his present state, may be adequate to unfold it.

It has, indeed, been maintained that, though our reason may be inadequate to the discovery of such truths as the kind of revelation we have supposed to be necessary must contain, yet, when aided by this revelation, it is raised into so perfect a condition, that what appears incongruous to it ought to be concluded contrary to the revelation itself. This, to a certain extent, is true. When a doctrine is clearly revealed to us, standing as it does upon an infallible authority, no contrary doctrine can be true, whether found without the record of the revelation, or deduced from it ; for this is, in fact, no more than saying that human opinions must be tried by divine authority, and that revelation must be consistent with itself. The test to which, in this case, however, we subject a contradictory doctrine, so long as we adhere to the revelation, is formed of principles which our reason did not furnish, but such as were communicated to us by supernatural interposition ; and the judge to which we refer is not, properly speaking, reason, but revelation.

But if by this is meant that our reason, once enlightened by the annunciation of the great truths of revelation, can discover or complete, in all cases, the process of their rational proof, that is, their conformity to the nature and truth of things, and is thus authorized to reject whatever cannot be thus harmonized with our own deductions from the leading truths thus revealed ; so great a concession cannot be made to human ability. In many of the rules of morals, and the doctrines of religion, too, it may be allowed that a course of thought is opened, which may be pursued to the enlargement of the rational evidence of the doctrines taught ; but not as to what concerns many of the attributes of God, his purposes

concerning the human race, some of his most important procedures towards us, and the future destiny of man. When once it is revealed that man is a creature, we cannot but perceive the reasonableness of our being governed by the law of our Creator ; we must also perceive that this is founded in his right, and our duty ; and that, when we are concerned with a wise, and gracious, and just Governor, what is our duty must, of necessity, be promotive of our happiness. But if the revelation should contain any declarations as to the nature of the Creator himself,—as, that he is eternal, and self-existent, and in every place, and that he knows all things,—the thoughts thus suggested, the doctrines thus stated, nakedly and authoritatively, are too mysterious to be distinctly apprehended by us, and we are unable, by comparing them with any thing else, (for we know nothing with which we can compare them,) to acquire any clear views of the manner in which such a Being exists, or why such perfections necessarily flow from his peculiar nature. If, therefore, the revelation itself does not state, in addition to the mere facts that he is self-existent, omnipresent, and omniscient, &c., the manner in which the existence of such attributes harmonizes with the nature and reason of things, we cannot supply the chasm ; and should we even catch some view of the rational evidence, which is not denied, we are unable to complete it ; our reason is not enlightened up to the full measure of these truths, nor, on such subjects, are we quite certain that some of our most rational deductions are perfectly sound ; and we cannot, therefore, make use of them as standards by which to try any doctrine, beyond the degree in which they are clearly revealed and authoritatively stated to us. Other examples might be given, but these are sufficient for illustration.

These observations being made, it will be easy to assign definite limits to the rule “that no doctrine in an admitted revelation is to be understood in a sense contrary to reason.” The only way in which such a rule can be safely received is, that nothing is to be taken as a true interpretation when, as to the subject in question, we have sufficient knowledge to affirm that the interpretation is contrary to the nature of things,

which, in this case, it is also necessary to be assured that we have been able to ascertain. Of some things we know the nature without a revelation, inasmuch as they lie within the range of our own observation and experience ; as, that a human body cannot be in two places at the same time. Of other things we know the nature by revelation, and by that our knowledge is enlarged. If, therefore, from some figurative passages of a revelation, any person—as the Papists—should affirm that wine is human blood, or that a human body can be in two places at the same time, it is contrary to our reason ; that is, not to mere opinion, but to the nature of something which we know so well, that we are bound to reject the interpretation as an absurdity. If, again, any were to interpret passages which speak of God as having the form of man, to mean that he has merely a local presence, our reason has been taught by revelation that God is a spirit, and exists every where ; that is, so far we have been taught the nature of things as to God, that we reject the interpretation as contrary to what has been so clearly revealed, and resolve every anthropomorphic expression we may find in the revelation into figurative and accommodated language. In the application of this rule, when even thus limited, care is, however, to be taken that we distinguish what is capable of being tried by it. If we compare one thing with another, in order to determine whether it agrees with or differs from it, it is not enough that we have sufficient knowledge of that with which we compare it, and which we have made the standard of judgment ; it is also necessary that the things compared should be of the same nature, and that the comparison should be made in the same respects. We take for illustration the case just given : Of two bodies we can affirm that they cannot be in the same place at the same time ; but we cannot affirm that of a body and a spirit ; for we know what relation bodies have to place and to each other, but we do not know what relation spirits have to each other or to space. This may illustrate the first rule. The second demands that the comparison be made in the same respect. If we affirm of two bodies, one of a round and the other of a square figure, that their figure is the same,

the comparison determines the case, and at once detects the error ; but of these bodies, so different in figure, it may be affirmed, without contradiction, that they are of the same specific gravity, for the difference of figure is not that in respect of which the comparison is made. We apply this to the interpretation of a revelation of God and his will. The rule which requires us to reject as a true interpretation of that revelation whatever is contrary to reason, may be admitted in all cases where we know the real nature of things, and conduct the comparison with the cautions just given ; but it would be most delusive, and would counteract the intention of the revelation itself, by unsettling its authority, if it were applied in any other way. For,

1. In all cases where the nature of things is not clearly and satisfactorily known, it cannot be affirmed that a doctrine contradicts them, and is therefore contrary to reason.

2. When that of which we would form a rational judgment is not itself distinctly apprehended, it cannot be satisfactorily compared with those things the nature of which we adequately know, and therefore it cannot be said to be contrary to reason.

Now, in such a revelation as we have supposed necessary for man, there are many facts and doctrines which are not capable of being compared with any thing we adequately know, and they therefore lie wholly without the range of the rule in question. We suppose it to declare what God, the infinite First Cause, is. But it is of the nature of such a Being to be, in many respects, peculiar to himself ; and as, in those respects, he cannot admit of comparison with any other, what may be false, if affirmed of ourselves, because contradictory to what we know of human nature, may be true of Him, to whom the nature of things is his own nature, and his own nature alone. The same observation may be made as to many of his natural attributes : They are the attributes of a peculiar nature, and are therefore peculiar to themselves, either in kind or in degree ; they admit of no comparison, each being, like himself, *sui generis* ; and the nature of things, as to them respectively, is their own nature. The same reasoning may, in part, be applied to the general purposes of God, in making and governing his creatures.

They are not, in every respect, capable of being compared to any thing we adequately know, in order to determine their reasonableness. Creatures do not stand to each other in all the relations in which they stand to him ; and no reasoning from their mutual relations can assist us in judging of the plans he has formed with respect to the whole, (with the extent of which, indeed, we are unacquainted,) or often of a part, whose relations to the whole we know not. Were we to subject what he has commanded us to do, or to leave undone, to the test of reasonableness, we should often be at a loss how to commence the inquiry ; for it may have a reason arising out of his own nature, which we either know not at all, or only in the partial and authoritative revelations he has made of himself ; or out of his general plans, of which we are not judges, for the reasons just given ; or its reason may lie in our own nature, which we know but partially, because we find it differently operated upon by circumstances, and cannot know in what circumstances we may, at any future time, be placed.

With respect to the moral perfections of God, as they are more capable of a complete comparison with what we find in intelligent creatures, the notion of infinity being applicable to them in a different sense from that in which it is applied to his natural attributes, and adequate ideas of justice and mercy and goodness being within our reach, this rule is much more applicable in all cases which would involve interpretations consistent with or opposed to these ideas ; and any deduction clearly contrary to them is to be rejected, as grounded, not upon the revelation, but a false interpretation. This will be the more confirmed, if we find any thing in the revelation itself in the form of an appeal to our own ideas of moral subjects, as, for instance, of justice and equity, in justification of the divine proceedings ; for then we have the authority of the Giver of the revelation himself for attaching such ideas to his justice and equity as are implied in the same terms in the language of men.* A doctrine which would impugn these

* Thus in the Scriptures we find numerous appeals of this kind : "Judge between me and my vineyard." "Are not my ways equal?" "Shall not

attributes is not therefore to be deduced from such a revelation ; but here the rule can only be applied to such cases as we fully comprehend. There may be an apparent injustice in a case, which, if we knew the whole of it, would be found to harmonize with the strictest equity ; and what evidence of conformity to the moral attributes of God it now wants may be manifested in a future state, either by superior information then vouchsafed to us, or, when the subject of the proceeding is an immortal being, by the different circumstances of compensation in which he may be placed.

Upon the whole, then, it will appear, that this rule of interpreting a revelation is necessarily but of limited application, and chiefly respects those parts of the record in which obscure passages and figurative language may occur. In most others, a revelation, if comprehensive, will be found its own interpreter, by bringing every doubtful case to be determined by its own unquestionable general principles, and explicit declarations. The use of reason, therefore, in matters of revelation, is to investigate the evidences on which it is founded, and fairly and impartially to interpret it according to the ordinary rules of interpretation in other cases. Its limit is the authority of God. When he has explicitly laid down a doctrine, that doctrine is to be humbly received, whatever degree of rational evidence may be afforded of its truth, or withheld ; and no torturing or perverting criticisms can be innocently resorted to, to bring a doctrine into a better accordance with our favourite views and systems, any more than to make a precept bend to the love and practice of our vicious indulgences. A larger scope than this cannot certainly be assigned to human reason in matters of revelation, when it is elevated to the office of a judge ; a judge of the evidences on which a professed revelation rests, and a judge of its meaning after the application of the established rules of interpretation in other cases.* But

the Judge of the whole earth do right ?” All of which passages suppose that equity and justice in God accord with the ideas attached to the same terms among men.

* See note A, at the end of this chapter, in which two common objections are answered.

if reason be considered as a learner, it may have a much wider range in those fields of intelligence which a genuine revelation from God will open to our view. All truth, even that which to us is most abstruse and mysterious, is capable of rational demonstration, though not to the reason of man, in the present state, and in some cases probably to no reason below that of the divine nature. Truth is founded in reality, and for that reason is truth. Some truths, therefore, which a revelation only could make known, will often appear to us rational, because consistent with what we already know. Meditation upon them, or experience of their reality in new circumstances in which we may be placed, may enlarge that evidence; and thus our views of the conformity of many of the doctrines revealed, with the nature and reality of things, may acquire a growing clearness and distinctness. The observations of others also may, by reading and converse, be added to our own, and often serve to carry out our minds into some new and richer vein of thought. Thus it is that reason, instead of being fettered, as some pretend, by being regulated, is enlightened by revelation, and enabled from the first principles, and by the grand land-marks which it furnishes, to pursue its inquiries into many subjects to an extent which enriches and ennobles the human intellect, and administers continual food to the strength of religious principle. This, however, is not the case with all subjects. Many, as we have already seen, are, from their very nature, wholly incapable of investigation. At the first step we launch into darkness, and find in religion, as well as in natural philosophy, beyond certain limits, insurmountable barriers, which bid defiance to human penetration; and even where the rational evidence of a truth, but nakedly stated in revelation, or very partially developed, can by human powers be extended, that circumstance gives us no qualification to judge of the truth of another doctrine which is stated on the mere authority of the dispenser of the revelation, and of which there is no evidence at all to our reason. It may belong to subjects of another and a higher class; and, if it be found in the record, is not to be explained away by principles which we may have drawn from other truths, though revealed; for

those inferences have no higher an authority than the strength of our own fallible powers, and consequently cannot be put in competition with the declarations of an infallible Teacher, ascertained by just rules of grammatical and literary interpretation.

NOTE A.—PAGE 140.

“IN whatever point of view,” says an able living author, “the subject be placed, the same arguments which show the incapability of man, by the light of nature, to discover religious truth, will serve likewise to show that, when it is revealed to him, he is not warranted in judging of it merely by the notions which he had previously formed; for, is it not a solecism to affirm that man’s natural reason is a fit standard for measuring the wisdom or truth of those things with which it is wholly unacquainted, except so far as they have been supernaturally revealed?”

“But what, then,” an objector will say, “is the province of reason? Is it altogether useless? or are we to be precluded from using it in this most important of all concerns,—for our security against error?”

Our answer is, that we do not lessen either the utility or the dignity of human reason by thus confining the exercise of it within those natural boundaries which the Creator himself hath assigned to it. We admit, with the Deist, that “reason is the foundation of all certitude;” and we admit, therefore, that it is fully competent to judge of the credibility of any thing which is proposed to it as a divine revelation; but we deny that it has a right to dispute (because, we maintain, that it has not the ability to disprove) the wisdom or the truth of those things which revelation proposes to its acceptance. Reason is to judge whether those things be indeed so revealed; and this judgment it is to form from the evidence to that effect. In this respect it is “the foundation of certitude,” because it enables us to ascertain the fact that God hath spoken to us. But this fact once established, the credibility, nay, the certainty, of the things revealed follows as of necessary consequence, since no deduction of reason can be more indubitable than this,—that whatever God reveals must be true. Here, then, the authority of reason ceases; its judgment is finally determined by the fact of the revelation itself; and it has, thenceforth, nothing to do but to believe and to obey.

“But are we to believe every doctrine, however incomprehensible, however mysterious, nay, however seemingly contradictory to sense and reason?”

We answer, that revelation is supposed to treat of subjects with which man's natural reason is not conversant; it is, therefore, to be expected that it should communicate some truths not to be fully comprehended by human understandings. But these we may safely receive upon the authority which declares them, without danger of violating truth. Real and evident contradictions no man can, indeed, believe whose intellects are sound and clear; but such contradictions are no more proposed for our belief than impossibilities are enjoined for our practice; though things difficult to understand, as well as things hard to perform, may, perhaps, be required of us, for the trial of our faith and resolution. Seeming contradictions may also occur; but these may seem to be such because they are slightly or superficially considered, or because they are judged of by principles inapplicable to the subject, and without so clear a knowledge of the nature of the things revealed as may lead us to form an adequate conception of them: These, however, afford no solid argument against the truth of what is proposed to our belief; since, unless we had really such an insight into the mysterious parts of revelation as might enable us to prove them to be contradictory and false, we have no good ground for rejecting them; and we only betray our own ignorance and perverseness in refusing to take God's word for the truth of things which pass man's understanding.

The simple question, indeed, to be considered is, whether it be reasonable to believe, upon competent authority, things which we can neither discover ourselves, nor, when discovered, fully and clearly comprehend. Now, every person of common observation must be aware, that, unless he be content to receive, solely upon the testimony of others, a great variety of information, much of which he may be wholly unable to account for or explain, he could scarcely obtain a competency of knowledge to carry him safely through the common concerns of life. And, with respect to scientific truths, the greatest masters in philosophy know full well that many things are reasonably to be believed, nay, must be believed on sure and certain grounds of conviction, though they are absolutely incomprehensible by our understandings, and even so difficult to be reconciled with other truths of equal certainty, as to carry the appearance of being contradictory and impossible. This will serve to show that it is not contrary to reason to believe, on sufficient authority, some things which cannot be comprehended, and some things which, from the narrow and circumscribed views we are able

to take of them, appear to be repugnant to our notions of truth. The ground on which we believe such things is the strength and certainty of the evidence with which they are accompanied. And this is precisely the ground on which we are required to believe the truths of revealed religion. The evidence that they come from God is, to reason itself, as incontrovertible a proof that they are true, as, in matters of human science, would be the evidence of sense, or of mathematical demonstration.

CHAPTER XII.

Antiquity of the Scriptures.

FROM the preparatory course of argument and observation which has been hitherto pursued, we proceed to the investigation of the question, Whether there are sufficient reasons to conclude that such a revelation of truth as we have seen to be so necessary for the instruction and moral correction of mankind, is to be found in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments ; a question of the utmost importance, inasmuch as, if not found there, there are the most cogent reasons for concluding that a revelation was never vouchsafed to man, or that it is irretrievably lost.

No person living in an enlightened country will, for a moment, contend that the Koran of Mahomet, or any of the reputed sacred writings of the Chinese, Hindoos, or Budhists, can be put into competition with the Bible ; so that it is universally acknowledged among us, that there is but one book in the world which has claims to divine authority so presumptively substantial as to be worthy of serious examination ; and, therefore, if the advantage of supernatural and infallible instruction has been afforded to man, it may be concluded to be found in that alone. This consideration indicates the proper temper of mind with which such an inquiry ought to be approached.

Instead of wishing to discover that the claims of the Scriptures to divine authority are unfounded, (the case, it is to be feared, with too many,) every humble and sincere man—who, conscious of his own mental infirmity, and recollecting the perplexities in which the wisest of men have been involved on religious and moral subjects—will wish to find, at length, an infallible guide, and will examine the evidences of the Bible with an anxious desire that he may find sufficient reason to

acknowledge their divine authority ; and he will feel that, should he be disappointed, he has met with a painful misfortune, and not a matter for triumph. If this temper of mind—which is perfectly consistent with full, and even severe, examination of the claim of Scripture—does not exist, the person destitute of it is neither a sincere nor an earnest inquirer after truth.

We may go further, and say, though we have no wish to prejudge the argument, that if the person examining the holy Scriptures, in order to ascertain the truth of their pretensions to divine authority, has had the means of only a general acquaintance with their contents, he ought, if a lover of virtue as well as truth, to be predisposed in their favour ; and that, if he is not, the moral state of his heart is liable to great suspicion. For, that the theological system of the Scriptures is in favour of the highest virtues, cannot be denied ; it both prescribes them, and affords the strongest possible motives to their cultivation : Love to God and to all mankind, meekness, courtesy, charity, the government of the appetites and affections within the rules of temperance, the renunciation of evil imaginations and sins of the heart, exact justice in all our dealings ; these, and, indeed, every other virtue, civil, social, domestic, and personal, are clearly taught, and solemnly commanded ; and it might be confidently put to every candid person, however sceptical, whether the universal observance of the morality of the Scriptures, by all ranks and nations, would not produce the most beneficial changes in society, and secure universal peace, friendship, and happiness. This he would not deny ; this has been acknowledged by some infidel writers themselves ; and, if so, if, after all the bewildering speculations of the wisest men on religious and moral subjects, (and which, as we have seen, led to nothing definite and influential,) a book is presented to us which shows what virtue is, and the means of attaining it ; which enforces it by sufficient sanctions, and points every individual and every community to a certain remedy for all their vices, disorders, and miseries ; we must renounce all title to be considered lovers of virtue, and lovers of our species, if we do not feel ourselves interested

in the establishment of its claims to divine authority ; and, because we love virtue, we shall wish that the proof of this important point may be found satisfactory. This, surely, is the temper of mind we ought to bring to such an inquiry ; and the rejection of the Scriptures by those who are not under its influence is rather a presumption in their favour, than a consideration which throws upon them the least discredit.

In addition to the proofs which have been given of the necessity of a revelation, both from the reason of things, and the actual circumstances of the world, it has been established that miracles actually performed, and prophecies really uttered and clearly accomplished, are satisfactory proofs of the authority of a communication of the will of God through the agency of men. We have, however, stated that, in cases where we are not witnesses of the miracles, and auditors of the predictions, but obtain information respecting them from some record, we must, before we can admit the force of the argument drawn from them, be assured that the record was early and faithfully made, and has been uncorruptly kept, with respect to the miracles ; and, with respect to the prophecies, that they were also uttered and recorded previously to those events occurring which are alleged to be accomplishments of them. These are points necessary to be ascertained before it is worth the trouble to inquire whether the alleged miracles have any claim to be considered as miraculous in the proper sense, and the predictions as revelations from an omniscient, and, consequently, a divine Being.

The first step in this inquiry is to ascertain the existence, age, and actions of the leading persons mentioned in Scripture as the instruments by whom, it is professed, the revelations they contain were made known.

With respect to these persons, it is not necessary that our attention should be directed to more than two, Moses and Christ,—one the reputed agent of the Mosaic, the other the author of the Christian, revelation ; because the evidence which establishes their existence and actions, and the period of both, will also establish all that is stated in the same records as to the subordinate and succeeding agents.

The biblical record states, that Moses was the leader and legislator of the nation of the Jews near sixteen hundred years before the Christian era, according to the common chronology. This is grounded upon the tradition and national history of the Jews ; and it is certain, that—so far from there being any reason to doubt the fact, much less to suppose, with an extravagant fancy of some modern infidels, that Moses was a mythological personage—the very same principles of historical evidence which assure us of the truth of any unquestioned fact of profane history, assure us of the truth of this. It cannot be doubted but that the Jews existed very anciently as a nation. It is equally certain, that it has been an uninterrupted and universally-received tradition among them in all ages, that Moses led them out of Egypt, and first gave them their system of laws and religion. The history of that event they have in writing, and also the laws attributed to him. There is nothing in the leading events of their history contradicted by remaining authentic historical records of those nations with whom they were geographically and politically related, to support any suspicion of its accuracy ; and as their institutions must have been established and enjoined by some political authority, and bear the marks of a systematic arrangement, established at once, and not growing up under the operation of circumstances at distant periods, to one superior and commanding mind they are most reasonably to be attributed. The Jews refer them to Moses ; and if this be denied, no proof can be offered in favour of any other person being entitled to that honour. The history is, therefore, uncontradicted by any opposing evidence, and can only be denied on some principle of scepticism which would equally shake the foundations of all history whatever.

The same observations may be made as to the existence of the Founder of the Christian religion. In the records of the New Testament he is called “ Jesus Christ,” because he professed to be the Messias predicted in the Jewish Scriptures, and was acknowledged as such by his followers ; and his birth is fixed upwards of eighteen centuries ago. This also is at

least uncontradicted testimony. The Christian religion exists, and must have had an author. Like the institutions of Moses, it bears the evidence of being the work of one mind ; and, as a theological system, presents no indications of a gradual and successive elaboration. There was a time when there was no such religion as that of Christianity, and when pagan idolatry and Judaism universally prevailed ; it follows that there once flourished a Teacher to whom it owed its origin ; and all tradition and history unite in their testimony, that that Law-giver was Jesus Christ. No other person has ever been adduced, living at a later period, as the founder of this form of religion.

To the existence and the respective antiquity ascribed in the Scriptures to the founders of the Jewish and Christian religion, many ancient writers give ample testimony ; who, being themselves neither of the Jewish nor Christian religion, cannot be suspected of having any design to furnish evidence of the truth of either. Manetho, Chæremón, Apollonius, and Lysimachus, beside some other ancient Egyptians whose histories are now lost, are quoted by Josephus, as extant in his days ; and passages are collected from them, in which they agree that Moses was the leader of the Jews when they departed from Egypt, and the founder of their laws. Strabo, who flourished in the century before Christ, (Geog., lib. 16,) gives an account of the law of Moses, as forbidding images, and limiting divine worship to one invisible and universal Being. Justin, a Roman historian, in his 36th book, devotes a chapter to an account of the origin of the Jews ; represents them as sprung from ten sons of Israel ; and speaks of Moses as the commander of the Jews who went out of Egypt, of the institution of the Sabbath, and the priesthood of Aaron. Pliny speaks of Moses, as giving rise to a sect of magicians, probably with reference to his contest with the magicians of Egypt. Tacitus says, “ Moses gave a new form of worship to the Jews, and a system of religious ceremonies, the reverse of every thing known to any other age or country.” Juvenal, in his 14th Satire, mentions Moses as the author of a volume which was preserved with great care among the Jews, by

which the worship of images and eating swine's flesh were forbidden, and circumcision and the observation of the Sabbath strictly enjoined. Longinus cites Moses as the lawgiver of the Jews, and praises the sublimity of his style in the account he gives of the creation. The Orphic verses, which are very ancient, inculcate the worship of one God as recommended by that law "which was given by him who was drawn out of the water, and received two tables of stone from the hand of God."* Diodorus Siculus, in his first book, when he treats of those who consider the gods to be the authors of their laws, adds, "Among the Jews was Moses, who called God by the name of *Ιαω*, *Ιαο*," meaning "Jehovah." Justin Martyr expressly says, that most of the historians, poets, lawgivers, and philosophers of the Greeks, mention Moses as the leader and Prince of the Jewish nation. From all these testimonies, (and many more, were it necessary, might be adduced,) it is clear that it was as commonly received among ancient nations, as among the Jews themselves, that Moses was the founder and lawgiver of the Jewish state.

As to Christ, it is only necessary to give the testimony of two historians, whose antiquity no one ever thought of disputing. Suetonius mentions him by name, and says, that Claudius expelled from Rome those who adhered to his cause.† Tacitus records the progress which the Christian religion had made, the violent death its Founder had suffered, that he flourished under the reign of Tiberius, that Pilate was then Procurator of Judea, and that the original Author of this profession was Christ.‡ Thus not only the real existence of the Founder of Christianity, but the period in which he lived, is exactly ascertained from writings the genuineness of which has never been doubted.

The antiquity of the books which contain the history, the doctrines, and the laws of the Jewish and the Christian law-

* Eus. *Præp. Ev.*, lib. 13, c. 12.

† *Judeos, impulsore Christo, assidue tumultuantes Romæ expulit.*—Suet. *Edit. Var.*, p. 544.

‡ *Auctor nominis ejus Christus, qui Tiberio imperitante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum supplicio affectus erat.*—*Annal.*, lib. 5.

givers, is next to be considered ; and the evidence is not less satisfactory. The importance of this fact in the argument is obvious. If the writings in question were made at, or very near, the time in which the miraculous acts recorded in them were performed, then the evidence of those events having occurred is rendered the stronger ; for they were written at the time when many were still living who might have contradicted the narration if false ; and the improbability is also greater, that, in the very age and place when and where those events are said to have been performed, any writer would have dared to run the hazard of prompt, certain, and disgraceful detection. It is equally important in the evidence of prophecy ; for if the predictions were recorded long before the events which accomplished them took place, then the only question which remains is, whether the accomplishment is satisfactory ; for then the evidence becomes irresistible.

With respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, the language in which they are written is a strong proof of their antiquity. The Hebrew ceased to be spoken as a living language soon after the Babylonish captivity, and the learned agree that there was no grammar made for the Hebrew till many ages after. The difficulty of a forgery, at any period after the time of that captivity, is therefore apparent. Of these books, too, there was a Greek translation made about two hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era, and laid up in the Alexandrian library.

Josephus gives a catalogue of the sacred books among the Jews, in which he expressly mentions the five books of Moses, thirteen of the Prophets, four of hymns and moral precepts ; and if, as many critics maintain, Ruth was added to Judges, and the Lamentations of Jeremiah to his prophecies, the number agrees with those of the Old Testament as it is received at the present day.

The Samaritans, who separated from the Jews many hundred years before the birth of Christ, have, in their language, a Pentateuch, in the main exactly agreeing with the Hebrew ; and the pagan writers before cited, with many others, speak

of Moses not only as a lawgiver and a Prince, but as the author of books esteemed sacred by the Jews.*

If the writings of Moses, then, are not genuine, the forgery must have taken place at a very early period ; but a few considerations will show, that at any time this was impossible.

These books could never have been surreptitiously put forth in the name of Moses, as the argument of Leslie most fully proves : “ It is impossible that those books should have been received as his, if not written by him, because they speak of themselves as delivered by Moses, and kept in the ark from his time. ‘ And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.’ (Deut. xxxi. 24—26.) A copy of this book was also to be left with the King : ‘ And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the Priests the Levites ; and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life,’ &c. (Deut. xvii. 18.) This book of the law thus speaks of itself, not only as a history or relation of what things were done, but as the standing and municipal law and statutes of the nation of the Jews, binding the King as well as the people. Now in whatever age after Moses this book may be supposed to have been forged, it was impossible that it could be received as truth, because it was not then to be found (as it professed to be) either in the ark, or with the King, or any where else ; for when first invented, every body must know that they had never heard of it before.

“ Could any man, now at this day, invent a book of statutes or Acts of Parliament for England, and make it pass upon the nation as the only book of statutes that ever they had known ?

* See note A, at the end of this chapter, for a larger proof of the above particulars.

As impossible was it for the books of Moses (if they were invented in any age after Moses) to have been received for what they declare themselves to be, namely, the statutes and municipal law of the nation of the Jews; and to have persuaded the Jews, that they had owned and acknowledged these books, all along from the days of Moses, to that day in which they were first invented; that is, that they had owned them before they had even so much as heard of them. Nay, more, the whole nation must, in an instant, forget their former laws and government, if they could receive these books as being their former laws. And they could not otherwise receive them, because they vouched themselves so to be. Let me ask the Deists but one short question: Was there ever a book of sham laws, which were not the laws of the nation, palmed upon any people, since the world began? If not, with what face can they say this of the book of laws of the Jews? Why will they say that of them, which they confess impossible in any nation, or among any people?

“But they must be yet more unreasonable. For the books of Moses have a further demonstration of their truth than even other law-books have; for they not only contain the laws, but give an historical account of their institution, and the practice of them from that time; as of the passover, in memory of the death of the first-born in Egypt;* and that the same day, all the first-born of Israel, both of man and beast, were, by a perpetual law, dedicated to God; and the Levites taken for all the first-born of the children of Israel. That Aaron’s rod which budded was kept in the ark, in memory of the rebellion and wonderful destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and for the confirmation of the priesthood to the tribe of Levi. As likewise the pot of manna, in memory of their having been fed with it forty years in the wilderness. That the brasen serpent was kept, (which remained to the days of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xviii. 4,) in memory of that wonderful deliverance, by only looking upon it, from the biting of the fiery serpents. (Num. xxi. 9.) The feast of Pentecost,

* Numbers viii. 17, 18.

in memory of the dreadful appearance of God upon Mount Horeb, &c.

“And besides these remembrances of particular actions and occurrences, there were other solemn institutions in memory of their deliverance out of Egypt, in the general, which included all the particulars. As of the Sabbath; (Deut. v. 15;) their daily sacrifices and yearly expiation; their new moons, and several feasts and fasts. So that there were yearly, monthly, weekly, daily remembrances and recognitions of these things.

“And not only so, but the books of the same Moses tell us, that a particular tribe (of Levi) was appointed and consecrated by God, as his Priests; by whose hands, and none other, the sacrifices of the people were to be offered, and these solemn institutions to be celebrated; that it was death for any other to approach the altar; that their High Priest wore a glorious mitre, and magnificent robes of God’s own contrivance, with the miraculous Urim and Thummim in his breast-plate, whence the divine responses were given;* that at his word, the King and all the people were to go out, and to come in; that these Levites were likewise the chief Judges even in all civil causes, and that it was death to resist their sentence.† Now, whenever it can be supposed that these books of Moses were forged in some ages after Moses, it is impossible they could have been received as true, unless the forgers could have made the whole nation believe that they had received these books from their fathers, had been instructed in them when they were children, and had taught them to their children; moreover, that they had all been circumcised, and did circumcise their children, in pursuance to what was commanded in these books; that they had observed the yearly passover, the weekly Sabbath, the new moons, and all these several feasts, fasts, and ceremonies commanded in these books; that they had never eaten any swine’s flesh, or other meats prohibited in these books; that they had a magnificent tabernacle, with a visible priesthood to administer in it, which was confined to

* Num. xxvii. 21.

† Deut. xvii. 8—13; 1 Chron. xxiii. 4.

the tribe of Levi ; over whom was placed a glorious High Priest, clothed with great and mighty prerogatives, whose death only could deliver those that were fled to the cities of refuge ; * and that these Priests were their ordinary Judges, even in civil matters : I say, was it possible to have persuaded a whole nation of men, that they had known and practised all these things, if they had not done it ? or, secondly, to have received a book for truth, which said they had practised them, and appealed to that practice ?

“ But now let us descend to the utmost degree of supposition, namely, that these things were practised before these books of Moses were forged ; and that those books did only impose upon the nation, in making them believe that they had kept these observances in memory of such and such things, as were inserted in those books.

“ Well then, let us proceed upon this supposition, (however groundless,) and now, will not the same impossibilities occur as in the former case ? For, first, this must suppose that the Jews kept all these observances in memory of nothing, or without knowing any thing of their original, or the reason why they kept them. Whereas these very observances did express the ground and reason of their being kept, as the Passover, in memory of God’s passing over the children of the Israelites, in that night wherein he slew all the first-born of Egypt ; and so of the rest.

“ But, secondly, let us suppose, contrary both to reason and matter of fact, that the Jews did not know any reason at all why they kept these observances ; yet was it possible to put it upon them, that they had kept these observances in memory of what they had never heard of before that day, whensoever you will suppose that these books of Moses were first forged ? For example : Suppose I should now forge some romantic story, of strange things done a thousand years ago ; and, in confirmation of this, should endeavour to persuade the Christian world that they had all along, from that day to this, kept the first day of the week in memory of such an hero, an

* Numbers xxxv. 25, 28.

Apollonius, a Barcosbas, or a Mahomet; and had all been baptized in his name; and swore by his name, and upon that very book,• (which I had then forged, and which they never saw before,) in their public judicatures; that this book was their Gospel and law, which they had ever since that time, these thousand years past, universally received and owned, and none other. I would ask any Deist, whether he thinks it possible that such a cheat could pass, or such a legend be received, as the Gospel of Christians; and that they could be made believe that they never had any other Gospel?

“Let me give one very familiar example more in this case. There is the Stonehenge in Salisbury Plain; every body knows it; and yet none knows the reason why those great stones were set there, or by whom, or in memory of what.

“Now, suppose I should write a book to-morrow, and tell them, that these stones were set up by Hercules, Polyphemus, or Garagantua, in memory of such and such of their actions; and, for a further confirmation of this, should say in this book, that it was written at the time when such actions were done, and by the very actors themselves, or eye-witnesses; and that this book had been received as truth, and quoted by authors of the greatest reputation in all ages since; moreover, that this book was well known in England, and enjoined by Act of Parliament to be taught our children, and that we did teach it to our children, and had been taught it ourselves when we were children. I ask any Deist, whether he thinks this could pass upon England; and whether if I, or any other, should insist upon it, we should not, instead of being believed, be sent to Bedlam.

“Now, let us compare this with the Stonehenge, as I may call it, or twelve great stones, set up at Gilgal, which is told in the fourth chapter of Joshua. There it is said, (verse 6,) that the reason why they were set up was, that when their children, in after ages, should ask the meaning of it, it should be told them.

“And the thing in memory of which they were set up was such as could not possibly be imposed upon that nation, at that

time when it was said to be done ; it was as wonderful and miraculous as their passage through the Red Sea.

“ For notice was given to the Israelites the day before, of this great miracle to be done. (Joshua iii. 5.) It was done at noon-day before the whole nation. And when the waters of Jordan were divided, it was not at any low ebb, but at the time when that river overflowed all his banks. (Verse 15.) And it was done, not by winds, or in length of time, which winds must take to do it ; but all on the sudden, as soon as the ‘feet of the Priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, then the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan ; and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off ; and the people passed over, right against Jericho. The Priests stood in the midst of Jordan till all the armies of Israel had passed over.’ ‘ And it came to pass, when the Priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the Priests’ feet were lifted up upon the dry land, that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. And the people came up out of Jordan, on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho. And those twelvestones, which they took out of Jordan, did Joshua pitch in Gilgal. And he spake unto the children of Israel, saying, When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones ? then shall ye let your children know, saying, Israel came over this Jordan on dry land. For the Lord your God dried up the waters of Jordan from before you, until ye were passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up from before us, until we were gone over : That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty : That ye might fear the Lord your God for ever.’ (Chap. iv., from verse 18.)

“ Now, to form our argument let us suppose, that there never was any such thing as *that* passage over Jordan ; that these stones at Gilgal were set up upon some other occa-

sion, in some after-age ; and then, that some designing man invented this book of Joshua, and said that it was written by Joshua at that time, and gave this stonage at Gilgal for a testimony of the truth of it : Would not every body say to him, ‘ We know the stonage at Gilgal, but we never heard before of this reason for it, nor of this book of Joshua. Where has it been all this while ? And where and how came you, after so many ages, to find it ? Besides, this book tells us, that this passage over Jordan was ordained to be taught our children, from age to age ; and therefore, that they were always to be instructed in the meaning of that stonage at Gilgal, as a memorial of it. But we were never taught it when we were children ; nor did ever teach our children any such thing. And it is not likely that it could have been forgotten, while so remarkable a stonage did continue, which was set up for that and no other end ! ’

“ And if, for the reasons before given, no such imposition could be put upon us as to the stonage in Salisbury Plain, how much less could it be as to the stonage at Gilgal ?

“ And if where we know not the reason of a bare naked monument, such a sham reason cannot be imposed, how much more is it impossible to impose upon us in actions and observances which we celebrate in memory of particular passages ! How impossible to make us forget those passages which we daily commemorate ; and persuade us, that we had always kept such institutions in memory of what we never heard of before ; that is, that we knew it before we knew it ! ”

This able reasoning has never been refuted, nor can be ; and if the books of the law must have been written by Moses, it is as easy to prove, that Moses himself could not in the nature of the thing have deceived the people by an imposture, and a pretence of miraculous attestations, in order, like some later lawgivers among the Heathens, to bring the people more willingly to submit to his institutions. The very instances of miracle he gives rendered this impossible. “ Suppose,” says the same writer, “ any man should pretend, that yesterday he divided the Thames, in presence of all the people of London, and carried the whole city, men, women, and children, over to

Southwark, on dry land, the waters standing like walls on both sides : I say, it is morally impossible that he could persuade the people of London that this was true, when every man, woman, and child could contradict him, and say, that this was a notorious falsehood ; for that they had not seen the Thames so divided, or had gone over on dry land.

“ As to Moses, I suppose it will be allowed me, that he could not have persuaded six hundred thousand men, that he had brought them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea ; fed them forty years, without bread, by miraculous manna ; and the other matters of fact recorded in his books, if they had not been true. Because every man’s senses that was then alive must have contradicted it. And therefore he must have imposed upon all their senses, if he could have made them believe it, when it was false and no such things done.

“ From the same reason, it was equally impossible for him to have made them receive his five books as truth, and not to have rejected them as a manifest imposture ; which told of all these things as done before their eyes, if they had not been so done. See how positively he speaks to them, Deut. xi. 2—7 : ‘ And know ye this day : For I speak not with your children, which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched-out arm, and his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt, unto Pharaoh the King of Egypt, and unto all his land ; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots ; how he made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day ; and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came into this place ; and what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel : But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord, which he did,’ &c.

“ From hence we must suppose it impossible that these books of Moses, if an imposture, could have been invented

and put upon the people who were then alive, when all these things were said to be done."

By these arguments,* the genuineness and authenticity of the books of Moses are established; and as to those of the Prophets, (which, with some predictions in the writings of Moses, comprise the prophetic branch of the evidence of the divine authority of the revelations they contain,) it can be proved, both from Jewish tradition, the list of Josephus, the Greek translation, and from their being quoted by ancient writers, that they existed many ages before several of those events occurred, to which we shall refer in the proper place as eminent and unequivocal instances of prophetic accomplishment. This part of the argument will therefore be also sufficiently established: The prophecy will be shown to have been delivered long before the event, and the event will be proved to be a fulfilment of the prophecy. A more minute examination of the date of the prophetic books rather belongs to those who write expressly on the canon of Scripture.

The same author, from whom we have already largely quoted,† applies his celebrated four rules for determining the truth of matters of fact in general, with equal force to the facts of the Gospel history as to those contained in the Mosaic writings. The rules are, "1. That the matter of fact be such, as that men's outward senses, their eyes and ears, may be judges of it. 2. That it be done publicly in the face of the world. 3. That not only public monuments be kept up in memory of it, but some outward actions be performed. 4. That such monuments and such actions and observances be insti-

* The reasoning of Leslie, so incontrovertible as to the four last books of the Pentateuch, does not so fully apply to the book of Genesis. Few, however, will dispute the genuineness of this, if that of the other books of Moses be conceded. That the book of Genesis must have been written prior to the other books of the Pentateuch is, however, certain; for Exodus constantly refers to events nowhere recorded but in the book of Genesis; and without the book of Genesis the abrupt commencement of Exodus would have been as unintelligible to the Jews, as it would be to us. The Pentateuch must therefore be considered as one book, under five divisions, having a mutual coherence and dependence.

† Leslie.

tuted, and do commence from the time that the matter of fact was done.”

We have seen the manner in which these rules are applied to the books of Moses. The author thus applies them to the Gospel :—

“I come now to show, that as in the matters of fact of Moses, so, likewise, all these four marks do meet in the matters of fact which are recorded in the Gospel of our blessed Saviour. And my work herein will be the shorter, because all that is said before of Moses and his books is every way as applicable to Christ and his Gospel. His works and his miracles are there said to be done publicly in the face of the world, as he argued to his accusers, ‘I spake openly to the world, and in secret have I said nothing.’ (John xviii. 20.) It is told, Acts ii. 41, that three thousand at one time ; and, Acts iv. 4, that above five thousand at another time, were converted, upon conviction of what themselves had seen, what had been done publicly before their eyes, wherein it was impossible to have imposed upon them. Therefore here were the two first rules before-mentioned.

“Then for the two second : Baptism and the Lord’s supper were instituted as perpetual memorials of these things ; and they were not instituted in after-ages, but at the very time when these things were said to be done ; and have been observed without interruption, in all ages through the whole Christian world, down all the way from that time to this. And Christ himself did ordain Apostles and other Ministers of his Gospel, to preach and administer the sacraments ; and to govern his church ; and that always, even unto the end of the world.* Accordingly, they have continued by regular succession to this day ; and, no doubt, ever shall, while the earth shall last. So that the Christian Clergy are as notorious a matter of fact, as the tribe of Levi among the Jews. And the Gospel is as much a law to the Christians, as the books of Moses to the Jews : And it being part of the matters of fact related in the Gospel, that such an order of men were

* Matt. xxviii. 20.

appointed by Christ, and to continue to the end of the world ; consequently, if the Gospel was a fiction, and invented (as it must be) in some ages after Christ ; then, at that time when it was first invented, there could be no such order of Clergy, as derived themselves from the institution of Christ ; which must give the lie to the Gospel, and demonstrate the whole to be false. And the matters of fact of Christ being pressed to be true, no otherwise than as there was at that time, (whenever the Deists will suppose the Gospel to be forged,) not only public sacraments of Christ's institution, but an order of Clergy, likewise, of his appointment to administer them : And it being impossible there could be any such things before they were invented, it is as impossible that they should be received when invented. And, therefore, by what was said above, it was as impossible to have imposed upon mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in after-ages, as at the time when those things were said to be done.

“ The matters of fact of Mahomet, or what is fabled of the heathen deities, do all want some of the aforesaid four rules, whereby the certainty of matters of fact is demonstrated. First, for Mahomet, he pretended to no miracles, as he tells us in his Alcoran, c. 6, &c. ; and those which are commonly told of him pass among the Mahometans themselves but as legendary fables ; and, as such, are rejected by the wise and learned among them, as the legends of their saints are in the Church of Rome. See Dr. Prideaux's *Life of Mahomet*, page 34.

“ But, in the next place, those which are told of him do all want the two first rules before-mentioned ; for his pretended converse with the moon, his Mersa, or night-journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and thence to heaven, &c., were not performed before any body ; we have only his own word for them. And they are as groundless as the delusions of Fox or Muggleton among ourselves. The same is to be said, in the second place, of the fables of the heathen gods,—of Mercury's stealing sheep, Jupiter's turning himself into a bull, and the like ; besides the folly and unworthiness of such senseless pretended miracles.

“It is true, the heathen deities had their Priests ; they had, likewise, feasts, games, and other public institutions in memory of them ; but all these want the fourth mark, namely, that such priesthood and institutions should commence from the time that such things as they commemorate were said to be done, otherwise they cannot secure after-ages from the imposture, by detecting it at the time when first invented, as hath been argued before. But the Bacchanalia, and other heathen feasts, were instituted many ages after what was reported of these gods was said to be done, and, therefore, can be no proof. And the Priests of Bacchus, Apollo, &c., were not ordained by these supposed gods, but were appointed by others, in after-ages, only in honour to them ; and, therefore, these orders of Priests are no evidence to the matters of fact which are reported of their gods.

“Now, to apply what has been said, you may challenge all the Deists in the world to show any action that is fabulous which has all the four rules or marks before mentioned. No, it is impossible. And, to resume a little what is spoken to before, the histories of Exodus and the Gospel never could have been received if they had not been true ; because the institution of the priesthood of Levi and of Christ, of the Sabbath, the passover, of circumcision, of baptism, and the Lord’s supper, &c., are there related as descending all the way down from those times without interruption. And it is full as impossible to persuade men that they had been circumcised or baptized, had circumcised or baptized their children, celebrated passovers, Sabbaths, sacraments, &c., under the government and administration of a certain order of Priests, if they had done none of these things, as to make them believe that they had gone through seas upon dry land, seen the dead raised, &c.: And without believing these it was impossible that either the law or the Gospel could have been received.

“And the truth of the matters of fact of Exodus and the Gospel being no otherwise pressed upon men than as they have practised such public institutions, it is appealing to the senses of mankind for the truth of them ; and makes it impossible for any to have invented such stories in after-ages,

without a palpable detection of the cheat when first invented ; as impossible as to have imposed upon the senses of mankind at the time when such public matters of fact were said to be done.”*

But other evidence of the truth of the Gospel history, beside that which arises from this convincing reasoning, may be adduced.

In the first place, the narrative of the Evangelists as to the actions, &c., of Christ, cannot be rejected without renouncing all faith in history, any more than to deny that he really existed.

“ We have the same reason to believe that the Evangelists have given us a true history of the life and transactions of Jesus, as we have that Xenophon and Plato have given us a faithful and just narrative of the character and doctrines of the excellent Socrates. The sacred writers were, in every respect, qualified for giving a real, circumstantial detail of the life and ligion of the person whose memoirs they have transmitted down to us. They were the select companions and familiar friends of the hero of their story ; they had free and liberal access to him at all times ; they attended his public discourses, and, in his moments of retirement, he unbosomed his whole soul to them without disguise ; they were daily witnesses of his sincerity and goodness of heart ; they were spectators of the amazing operations he performed, and of the silent, unostentatious manner in which he performed them ; in private he explained to them the doctrines of his religion, in the most familiar, endearing converse, and gradually initiated them into the principles of his Gospel, as their Jewish prejudices admitted ; some of these writers were his inseparable attendants, from the commencement of his public ministry to his death, and could give the world as true and faithful a narrative of his character and instructions as Xenophon was enabled to publish of the life and philosophy of Socrates. If Plato hath been, in every respect, qualified to compose an

* See note B at the end of this chapter, in which the same kind of argument is illustrated by the miraculous gift of tongues.

historical account of the behaviour of his master in his imprisonment, of the philosophic discourses he addressed to his friends before he drank the poisonous bowl, as he constantly attended him in those unhappy scenes, was present at those mournful interviews,*—in like manner was the Apostle John fitted for compiling a just and genuine narration of the last consolatory discourses our Lord delivered to his dejected followers, a little before his last sufferings, and of the unhappy exit he made, with its attendant circumstances, of which he was a personal spectator. The foundation of these things cannot be invalidated without invalidating the faith of history. No writers have enjoyed more propitious, few have ever enjoyed such favourable, opportunities for publishing just accounts of persons and things as the Evangelists. Most of the Greek and Roman historians lived long after the persons they immortalize, and the events they record. The sacred writers commemorate actions they saw, discourses they heard, persecutions they supported; describe characters with which they were familiarly conversant, and transactions and scenes in which they themselves were intimately interested: The pages of their history are impressed with every feature of credibility; an artless simplicity characterizes all their writings; nothing can be farther from vain ostentation and popular applause; no studied arts to dress up a cunningly-devised fable; no vain declamation after any miracle of our Saviour they relate; they record these astonishing operations with the same dispassionate coolness as if they had been common transactions, without that ostentatious rodomontade which enthusiasts and impostors universally employ; they give us a plain, unadorned narration of these amazing feats of supernatural power, saying nothing previously to raise our expectation, or after their performance breaking forth into any exclamation, but leaving the reader to draw the conclusion; the writers of these books are distinguished above all the authors who ever wrote accounts

* *Quid dicam de Socrate*, says Cicero, *cujus morti illachrymari soleo*, *Platonem legens*?—*De Natura Deorum*, p. 329, edit. Davies, 1723. See also Plato's *Phædo*, *passim*, particularly pages 311, 312, edit. Forster, Oxon. 1741.

of persons and things, for their sincerity and integrity. Enthusiasts and impostors never proclaim to the world the weakness of their understanding, and the defects of their character. The Evangelists honestly acquaint the reader with the lowness of their station, the indigence of their circumstances, the inveteracy of their national prejudices, their dullness of apprehension, their weakness of faith, their ambitious views, and the warm contentions they agitated among themselves; they even tell us how they basely deserted their Master, by a shameful, precipitate flight, when he was seized by his enemies; and that, after his crucifixion, they had all again returned to their former secular employments, for ever resigning all the hopes they had once fondly cherished, and abandoning the cause in which they had so long been engaged, notwithstanding all the proofs which had been exhibited, and the conviction they had before entertained, that Jesus was the Messiah, and that his religion was from God. A faithful picture this, held up to the reader, for him to contemplate the true features of the writers' mind. Such men as these were as far from being deceived themselves as they were incapable of imposing a falsehood upon others. The sacred regard they had for truth appears in every thing they relate: They mention, with many affecting circumstances, the obstinate, unreasonable incredulity of one of their associates, not convinced but by ocular and sensible demonstration. They might have concealed from the world their own faults and follies; or, if they had chosen to mention them, might have alleged plausible reasons to soften and extenuate them; but they related, without disguise, events and facts just as they happened, and left them to speak their own language. So that to reject a history thus circumstanced, and impeach the veracity of writers furnished with these qualifications for giving the justest accounts of personal characters and transactions, which they enjoyed the best opportunity for accurately observing and knowing, is an affront offered to the reason and understanding of mankind: A solecism against the laws of truth and history would, with equal reason, lead men to disbelieve every thing related in Herodotus, Thucydides, Diodorus

Siculus, Livy, and Tacitus, to confound all history with fable and fiction, truth with falsehood, and veracity with imposture, and not to credit any thing, how well soever attested ; that there were such Kings as the Stuarts, or such places as Paris and Rome, because we are not indulged with ocular conviction of them. The truth of the Gospel history [independent of the question of the inspiration of the sacred writers] rests upon the same basis with the truth of other ancient books ; and its pretensions are to be impartially examined by the same rules by which we judge of the credibility of all other historical monuments. And if we compare the merit of the sacred writers, as historians, with that of other writers, we shall be convinced that they are inferior to none who ever wrote, either with regard to knowledge of persons, acquaintance with facts, candour of mind, and reverence for truth.”*

A second source of evidence to the truth of the history of the Evangelists may be brought from the testimonies of adversaries and Heathens to the leading facts which they record.

No public contradiction of this history was ever put forth by the Jewish rulers to stop the progress of a hateful religion, though they had every motive to contradict it, both in justification of themselves, who were publicly charged as murderers of the Just One, and to preserve the people from the infection of the spreading delusion. No such contradiction has been handed down, and none has been adverted to or quoted by any ancient writer. This silence is not unimportant evidence ; but the direct testimonies to the facts are numerous and very important.

We have already quoted the testimonies of Tacitus and Suetonius to the existence of Jesus Christ, the Founder of the Christian religion, and of his crucifixion in the reign of Tiberius, and during the Procuratorship of Pontius Pilate, the time in which the Evangelists place that event. Other references to heathen authors, who incidentally allude to Christ, his religion, and followers, might be given ; such as Martial, Juvenal,

* Harwood's Introduction to the New Testament.

Epictetus, Trajan, the younger Pliny, Adrian, Apuleius, Lucian of Samosata, and others; some of whom also afford testimonies to the destruction of Jerusalem, at the time and in the circumstances predicted by our Saviour, and to the antiquity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament. But, as it is well observed by the learned Lardner, in his Collection of Jewish and heathen testimonies,* “among all the testimonies to Christianity which we have met with in the first ages, none are more valuable and important than the testimonies of those learned philosophers who wrote against us; Celsus in the second century, Porphyry and Hierocles in the third, and Julian in the fourth.” Referring to Lardner for full information on this point, a brief exhibition of the admissions of these adversaries will be satisfactory.

Celsus wrote against Christianity not much above one hundred and thirty years after our Lord’s ascension, and his books were answered by the celebrated Origen. The following is a summary of the references of this writer to the Gospel history, by Leland.† The passages at large may be seen in Lardner’s Testimonies:—

“Celsus, a most bitter enemy to Christianity, who began in the second century, produces many passages out of the Gospels. He represents Jesus to have lived but a few years ago. He mentions his being born of a virgin; the angel’s appearing to Joseph on occasion of Mary’s being with child; the star that appeared at his birth; the wise men that came to worship him when an infant, and Herod’s massacring the children; Joseph’s fleeing with the child into Egypt by the admonition of an angel; the Holy Ghost’s descending on Jesus like a dove, when he was baptized by John, and the voice from heaven declaring him to be the Son of God; his going about with his disciples; his healing the sick and lame, and raising the dead; his foretelling his own sufferings and resurrection; his being betrayed and forsaken by his own disciples; his suffering both of his own accord and in obedience to his heavenly Father; his grief and trouble, and his praying, ‘Father, if it be possible,

* Vol. iv., p. 330.

† Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation, vol. ii., c. 5.

let this cup pass from me ;' the ignominious treatment he met with ; the robe that was put upon him ; the crown of thorns ; the reed put into his hand ; his drinking vinegar and gall, and his being scourged and crucified ; his being seen after his resurrection by a fanatical woman, (as he calls her, meaning Mary Magdalen,) and by his own companions and disciples ; his showing them his hands that were pierced, the marks of his punishment. He also mentions the angels being seen at his sepulchre, and that some said it was one angel, others, that it was two ; by which he hints at the seeming variation in the accounts given of it by the Evangelists.

“ It is true, he mentions all these things only with a design to ridicule and expose them. But they furnish us with an uncontested proof, that the Gospel was then extant. Accordingly, he expressly tells the Christians, ‘ These things we have produced out of your own writings.’ (Page 106.) And he all along supposeth them to have been written by Christ’s own disciples, that lived and conversed with him ; though he pretends they feigned many things for the honour of their Master. (Pages 69, 70.) And he pretends that he could tell many other things relative to Jesus, beside those things that were written of him by his own disciples ; but that he willingly passed by them. (Page 67.) We may conclude from his expressions, both that he was sensible that these accounts were written by Christ’s own disciples ; (and indeed he never pretends to contest this ;) and that he was not able to produce any contrary accounts to invalidate them, as he certainly would have done, if it had been in his power, since no man ever wrote with greater virulence against Christianity than he. And, indeed, how was it possible for ‘ ten or eleven publicans and boatmen,’ as he calls Christ’s disciples by way of contempt, (page 47,) to have imposed such things on the world, if they had not been true, so as to persuade such vast multitudes to embrace a new and despised religion, contrary to all their prejudices and interests, and to believe in one that had been crucified ?

“ There are several other things which show that Celsus was acquainted with the Gospel. He produces several of our

Saviour's sayings, there recorded ; as, ' that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God ;' that ' to him who smites us on one cheek, we must turn the other ;' that ' it is not possible to serve two masters ;' his precept against ' thoughtfulness for to-morrow,' by a comparison drawn from ' crows and lilies ;' his foretelling that false prophets should arise and work wonders. He mentions also some passages of the Apostle Paul, such as these : ' The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world ;' ' The wisdom of man is foolishness with God ;' ' An idol is nothing.'

" The use I would make of all this is, that it appears here with an uncontested evidence by the testimony of one of the most malicious and virulent adversaries the Christian religion ever had, and who was also a man of considerable parts and learning, that the writings of the Evangelists were extant in his time, which was the next century to that in which the Apostles lived ; and that those accounts were written by Christ's own disciples, and consequently that they were written in the very age in which the facts related were done, and when, therefore, it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have convicted them of falsehood, if they had not been true."

Porphyry flourished about the year 270, a man of great abilities ; and his work against the Christians, in fifteen books, was long esteemed by the Gentiles, and thought worthy of being answered by Eusebius, and others in great repute for learning. He was well acquainted with the books of the Old and New Testaments ; and in his writings are plain references to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, John, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistle to the Galatians, and probable references to the other Epistles of St. Paul. About the year 303, Hierocles, a man of learning, and a Magistrate, wrote against the Christians in two books. He was well acquainted with our Scriptures, and made many objections to them ; thereby bearing testimony to their antiquity, and to the great respect which was shown them by the Christians ; for he has referred both to the Gospels and to the Epistles. He men-

tions Peter and Paul by name, and did not deny the truth of our Saviour's miracles ; but, in order to overthrow the argument which the Christians built upon them, he set up the reputed miracles of Apollonius Tyanæus to rival them. The Emperor Julian, who succeeded Constantius in the year 361, wrote also against the Christians ; and in his work has undesignedly borne a valuable testimony to the history and books of the New Testament. He allows that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, at the time of a taxing made in Judea by Cyrenius ; that the Christian religion had its rise, and began to be propagated, in the times of the Roman Emperors, Tiberius and Claudius. He bears witness to the genuineness and authenticity of the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Acts of the Apostles. And he so quotes them as to intimate that these were the only historical books received by Christians, as of authority ; and the only authentic memoirs of Jesus Christ and his Apostles, and the doctrines preached by them. He allows the early date of the Gospels, and even argues for them. He quotes, or plainly refers to, the Acts of the Apostles, as already said ; to St. Paul's Epistles to the Romans, to the Corinthians, and to the Galatians. He does not deny the miracles of Jesus Christ, but allows him to have healed the blind, and the lame, and demoniacs, and to have rebuked the winds, and to have walked upon the waves of the sea. He endeavours, indeed, to diminish those works, but in vain. He endeavours also to lessen the number of the early believers in Jesus ; but acknowledges, that there were multitudes of such men in Greece and Italy before St. John wrote his Gospel. He likewise affects to diminish the quality of the early believers ; and yet acknowledges, that, beside men-servants and maid-servants, Cornelius, a Roman Centurion at Cesarea, and Sergius Paulus, Proconsul of Cyprus, were converted to the faith of Jesus before the end of the reign of Claudius. And he often speaks with great indignation of Peter and Paul, those two great Apostles of Jesus, and successful Preachers of his Gospel. So that, upon the whole, he has undesignedly borne witness to the truth of many things recorded in the books of the New Testa-

ment. He aimed to overthrow the Christian religion, but has confirmed it. His arguments against it are perfectly harmless, and insufficient to unsettle the weakest Christian.

The quotations from Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian may be consulted in Lardner, who thus sums up his observations on their testimony :—

“ They bear a fuller and more valuable testimony to the books of the New Testament, and to the facts of the evangelical history, and to the affairs of Christians, than all our other witnesses besides. They proposed to overthrow the arguments for Christianity ; they aimed to bring back to Gentilism those who had forsaken it, and to put a stop to the progress of Christianity by the farther addition of new converts. But in those designs they had very little success in their own times ; and their works, composed and published in the early days of Christianity, are now a testimony in our favour, and will be of use in the defence of Christianity to the latest ages.

“ One thing more which may be taken notice of is this, that the remains of our ancient adversaries confirm the present prevailing sentiments of Christians concerning those books of the New Testament which we call ‘ canonical,’ and are in the greatest authority with us ; for their writings show that those very books, and not any others now generally called ‘ apocryphal,’ are the books which always were in the highest repute with Christians, and were then the rule of their faith, as they are now of ours.”

To the same effect are the observations of Paley : These testimonies “ prove that neither Celsus in the second, Porphyry in the third, nor Julian in the fourth century, suspected the authenticity of these books, or even insinuated that Christians were mistaken in the authors to whom they ascribed them ; not one of them expressed an opinion upon this subject different from that which is holden by Christians. And when we consider how much it would have availed them to cast a doubt upon this point if they could, and how ready they showed themselves to take every advantage in their power, and that they were men of learning and inquiry, their

concession, or rather their suffrage, upon the subject is extremely valuable."

That the facts and statements recorded in the evangelic history were not forgeries of a subsequent period, is made, also, still more indubitable from the fact that the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, are quoted or alluded to by a series of Christians, beginning with those who were contemporary with the Apostles, or who immediately followed, and proceeding in close and regular succession from their time to the present. "The medium of proof stated in this proposition," observes Dr. Paley, "is, of all others, the most unquestionable, and is not diminished by the lapse of ages. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his Own Times, inserts various extracts from Lord Clarendon's History. One such insertion is a proof that Lord Clarendon's History was extant when Bishop Burnet wrote; that it had been read and received by him as a work of Lord Clarendon's, and regarded by him as an authentic account of the transactions which it relates; and it will be a proof of these points a thousand years hence. The application of this argument to the Gospel history is obvious: If the different books which are received by Christians as containing this history are quoted by a series of writers, as genuine in respect of their authors, and as authentic in respect of their narrative, up to the age in which the writers of them lived; then it is clear that these books must have had an existence previous to the earliest of those writings in which they are quoted, and that they were then admitted as authentic." "Their genuineness is made out as well by the general arguments which evince the genuineness of the most indisputed remains of antiquity, as also by peculiar and specific proofs; by citations from them in writings belonging to a period immediately contiguous to that in which they were published; by the distinguished regard paid by early Christians to the authority of these books; which regard was manifested by their collecting of them into a volume, appropriating to that volume titles of peculiar respect, translating them into various languages, disposing them into Harmonies, writing Commentaries upon them, and, still more conspicuously, by the reading

of them in their public assemblies in all parts of the world; by a universal agreement with respect to these books, whilst doubts were entertained concerning some others; by contending sects appealing to them; by many formal catalogues of these, as of certain and authoritative writings, published in different and distant parts of the world; lastly, by the absence or defect of the above-cited topics of evidence when applied to any other histories of the same subject.”*

All the parts of this argument may be seen clearly made out by passages quoted from the writers of the primitive ages of the Christian church, in Dr. Lardner’s *Credibility*, Dr. Paley’s *Evidences*, and many other writers in defence of Christianity; it is exhibited in great force, also, in the first volume of Horne’s *Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures*.

* Paley’s *Evidences*, chap. 10.

NOTE A.—PAGE 152.

“THE documents which claim to have been thus handed down to posterity are the five books attributed to Moses himself, and usually denominated ‘The Pentateuch.’ Now, the question before us is, whether they were, indeed, written synchronically with the exodus, or whether they were composed in the name of Moses at a much later period.

“That the Jews have acknowledged the authenticity of the Pentateuch, from the present day to the era of our Lord’s nativity,—a period of more than eighteen centuries,—admits not of a possibility of a doubt. But this era is long posterior to that of Moses himself: it will be necessary, therefore, in order to establish the point under discussion, to travel backwards, step by step, so far as we can safely penetrate, according to the established rules of moral evidence.

“About two hundred and seventy-seven years before the Christian era, in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt, the Pentateuch, with the other books of the Old Testament, was translated into Greek, for the use of the Alexandrian Jews; and, from the almost universal prevalence of that language, it henceforth became very widely disseminated, and was thus rendered accessible to the learned and inquisitive of every country.

“Now, the Greek translation, which is still extant, and which is in the hands of almost every person, demonstrates that the Hebrew Pentateuch must have existed two hundred and seventy-seven years before Christ; because there is that correspondency between the two which amply proves that the former must have been a version of the latter. But if it certainly existed two hundred and seventy-seven years before Christ, it must have existed in the days of Ezra, at the time of the return from Babylon, in the year before Christ 536; because there is no point between those two epochs to which, with a shadow of probability, we can ascribe its composition. It existed, therefore, in the year 536 before the Christian era.

“Thus we have gained one retrogressive step; let us next see whether, with equal certainty, we can gain another.

“As it cannot be rationally denied that the Pentateuch has been in existence ever since the return of the Jews from Babylon, in the year 563 before the Christian era, some have thence been pleased to contend that it was the work of Ezra; being a digested compilation of the indistinct and fabulous traditions of that people, which, like most nations of antiquity, they possessed in great abundance.

“To such an opinion, when thoroughly sifted, there are insuperable objections, however specious it may appear to a hasty observer.

“In the book of Ezra the law of Moses, the man of God, is specifically referred to as a well-known written document then actually existing; and in the succeeding book of Nehemiah we have an ample account of the mode in which that identical written document was openly read to the people, under the precise name of ‘the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.’ Nor is this all: It was not that Ezra produced a new volume, and called upon the Jews to receive it as the authentic law of Moses; but the people themselves called upon Ezra to bring forth and read that book, as a work with which they had long been familiarly acquainted. The law of Moses, therefore, must have been well known to exist in writing previous to the return from Babylon; and as Ezra could not have produced, under that name, a mere compilation of oral traditions, so neither could he have suppressed the ancient volume of the law, nor have set forth, instead of it, that volume which the Jews have ever since received as the authentic Pentateuch. His own book affords proof positive that some written law of Moses was known previously to have existed; and the call of the people, that it should be read to them, demonstrates that it could not long have perished; for if the work had been confessedly lost for many years, the people could not have called for that which neither they nor their fathers had ever beheld. If, then, it were suppressed by Ezra, in favour of his own spurious composition, he must both have contrived to

make himself master of every extant copy of the genuine work, and he must have persuaded a whole people to receive as genuine what almost every man amongst them must immediately have perceived to be spurious. For if the genuine work were in existence down to the very time of Ezra, (a point clearly involved in the demand of the people to have it read to them,) and if the people had long been accustomed to hear it read to them, (a point equally implied in their recorded demand upon Ezra,) they must all have been adequately acquainted with its contents; and the higher ranks among them must have repeatedly perused, and must, therefore, have known, the whole of it just as intimately as Ezra could do himself. But, what was thus universally familiar could be no more set aside by the fiat of an individual, in favour of his own spurious composition, than the Pentateuch could now be set aside throughout Christendom, in favour of some newly-produced volume which claimed to be the genuine law of Moses. Add to this, that when the foundations of the second temple were laid, many persons were alive who well remembered the first: These, consequently, must have known whether there was or was not a written law of Moses anterior to the captivity; nor could they be deceived by the production of any novel composition by Ezra.

“Such is the evidence afforded, by the very books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to the existence of a written law of Moses prior to the return from Babylon, of a law familiarly known to the whole body of the people. But there is yet another evidence to the same purpose, analogous to that furnished by the Greek translation of the Seventy.

“We have now extant two Hebrew copies of the law of Moses; the one received by the Jews, the other acknowledged by the Samaritans; each maintaining that their own is the genuine record. Now, if we examine these two copies, we shall find their coincidence throughout to be such, that we cannot doubt a moment as to their original identity, in every word, and in every sentence.

“We read, that, after the King of Assyria had deported the ten tribes, and had colonized their territories with a mixed multitude from various parts of his dominions, the new settlers were infested by the incursions of wild beasts. This calamity, agreeably to the prevalent notion of local tutelary gods, they attributed to their not worshipping the god of the land after his own prescribed manner. To remedy the defect, therefore, one of the deported Levitical Priests was sent to them, that he might ‘teach them,’ as the Assyrian Monarch expressed himself, ‘the manner of the god of the land.’ The Priest accordingly came among them, and dwelt in Bethel, and taught them how they should fear Jehovah; but while they duly

received his instructions, they mixed the service of the true God with the service of their native idols ; hence, so far as that particular was concerned, we are informed that ‘ they neither did after their statutes, nor after their ordinances, nor after the law and commandment which Jehovah commanded the children of Jacob.’

“ Now, it is obvious that the whole of this account supposes them to have a copy of the Pentateuch ; for if the Priest were to instruct them in the law of the Lord, he would, of course, communicate to them a copy of that law ; and though their ancient superstitions led them to disregard its prohibitions, still it could not have been properly said of them, that ‘ they neither did after their statutes, nor after their ordinances, nor after the law and commandment which Jehovah commanded the children of Jacob,’ if, all the while, they were wholly unacquainted with those statutes, and those ordinances, and with that law, and with that commandment. It is manifest, therefore, that they must, at that time, have received the copy of the Pentateuch ; which they always afterwards religiously preserved. But this copy is the very same as that which the Jews and ourselves still receive ; consequently, as the Samaritans received it some years prior even to the Babylonian captivity of Judah, and as it is the very same code as that which some would fain attribute to Ezra, we may be sure that that learned scribe could not possibly have been its author, but that he has handed down to us the genuine law of Moses with the utmost good faith and integrity.

“ Here we cannot but observe the providence of God in raising up so unobjectionable a testimony as that of the Samaritans. They and the Jews cordially hated each other, and they both possessed a copy of the Pentateuch ; hence, had there been any disposition to tamper with the text, they acted as a mutual check ; and the result has been that, perhaps, not a wilful alteration can be shown, except the text relative to Gerizim and Ebal.

“ The universal admission of the Pentateuch, as the inspired law of Moses, throughout the whole commonwealth of Israel, prior to its disruption into two hostile kingdoms, the magnificent temple of Solomon, and the whole ritual attached to it, plainly depends altogether upon the previously-existing Pentateuch ; and that code so strictly prohibits more than one practice of Solomon, that, even to say nothing of the general objection from novelty, it is incredible either that he should have been its author, or that it should have been written under his sanction and authority.

“ As little can we, with any degree of probability, ascribe it to David. His life was occupied with almost incessant troubles and warfare ; and it is difficult to conceive how a book written by that Prince could, in the space of a very few years, be universally received

as the inspired composition of Moses, when no person had ever previously heard that Moses left any legislative code behind him.

“The Pentateuch might be more plausibly given to Samuel than to either of those two Princes; but this supposition will not stand for a moment the test of rational inquiry; we shall still have the same difficulty to contend with as before; we shall still have to point out how it was possible that Samuel should persuade all Israel to adopt, as the inspired and authoritative law of Moses, a mere modern composition of his own, which no person had ever previously heard of.

“We have now ascended to within less than four centuries after the exodus from Egypt, and the alleged promulgation of the law from Mount Sinai; and, from Ezra to Samuel, we have found no person to whom the composition of the Pentateuch can, with any show of reason or probability, be assigned. The only remaining question is, whether it can be thought to have been written during the three hundred and fifty-six years which elapsed between the entrance of the Israelites into Palestine, and the appointment of Saul to be King of Israel.

“Now, the whole history which we have of that period utterly forbids such a supposition. The Israelites, though perpetually lapsing into idolatry, are uniformly described as acknowledging the authority of a written law of Moses; and this law, from generation to generation, is stated to be the directory by which the Judges governed the people. Thus, Samuel expressly refers to a well-known commandment of Jehovah, and to the divine legation of Moses and Aaron, in a speech which he made to the assembled Israelites. Thus, the man of God, in his prophetic threat to Eli, similarly refers to the familiar circumstance recorded in the Pentateuch, that the house of his ancestor had been chosen to the Pontificate out of all the tribes of Israel. Thus, when the nations are enumerated which were left to prove the people, it is said that they were left for this purpose,—that it might be known whether the Israelites would hearken unto the commandments of Jehovah, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Thus, Joshua is declared to have written the book which bears his name, as a supplement to a prior book, which is denominated ‘the book of the law of God.’ Thus, likewise, he especially asserts that ‘this book of the law of God’ is ‘the book of the law of Moses;’ speaking familiarly of precepts which are written in that book; represents himself as reading its contents to all the assembled people, so that none of them could be ignorant of its purport; and mentions his writing a copy of it in the presence of the children of Israel. And thus, finally, we hear of the original, whence that copy is professed to have been taken, in the volume of the Pentateuch itself; for we are there told

that Moses, with his own hand, wrote the words of this law in a book; and that he then commanded the Levites to take this book of the law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant, that it might be there for a witness, in all succeeding ages, against the Israelites, in case they should violate its precepts.”—Abridged from FABER’S *Horæ Mosaicæ*.

NOTE B.—PAGE 164.

“IN events so public and so signal there was no room for mistake or deception. Of all the miracles recorded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, there is not one of which the evidence is so multiplied as that of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; for it rests not on the testimony of those, whether many or few, who were all with one accord in one place; it is testified by all Jerusalem, and by the natives of regions far distant from Jerusalem; ‘for there were then,’ says the historian, ‘dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven; and when the inspiration of the disciples was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were all confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language; and they were all amazed, and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these who speak Galileans? and how hear we every man in our own tongue wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.’

“It hath been objected by infidelity, to the resurrection of Christ, that he ought to have appeared publicly wherever he had appeared before his crucifixion; but here is a miracle displayed much farther than the resurrection of Christ could have been by his preaching openly, and working miracles for forty days in the temple and synagogues of Jerusalem, as he had done formerly; and this miracle is so connected with the resurrection, that if the Apostles’ speaking a variety of tongues be admitted, the resurrection of Jesus cannot be denied. In reply to those (probably the natives of Jerusalem) who, imagining that the Apostles uttered gibberish, charged them with being full of new wine, St. Peter said, ‘Ye men of Judea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words; for these men are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God

did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know; him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and, by wicked hands, have crucified and slain. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses. Therefore, being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.'

"Thus, by the miraculous effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, were the resurrection and ascension of Christ proved to a variety of nations of Asia, Africa, and Europe, all the quarters of the globe which were then known, as completely as if he had actually appeared among that mixed multitude in Jerusalem, reproved the High Priest and council of the Jews for their unbelief and hardness of heart, and then ascended in their presence to heaven. They had such evidence as was incontrovertible that St. Peter and the other Apostles were inspired by the Spirit of God; they could not but know, as every Theist admits, that the Spirit of God never was, nor ever will be, shed abroad to enable any order of men to propagate falsehood with success: One of those who, by this inspiration, were speaking correctly a variety of tongues, assured them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had slain, was raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God; and that the same Jesus had, according to his promise, shed abroad on the Apostles that which they both saw and heard. The consequence of all this, we are told, was, that three thousand of his audience were instantly converted to the faith, and the same day incorporated into the church by baptism.

"Would any man in his senses have written a narrative of such events as these at the very time when they are said to have happened, and in any one of those countries to the inhabitants of which he appeals as witnesses of their truth, if he had not been aware that their truth could not be called in question? Would any forger of such a book as the Acts of the Apostles, at a period near to that in which he relates that such astonishing events had happened, have needlessly appealed, for the truth of his narrative, to the people of all nations, and thus gone out of his way to furnish his readers with innumerable means of detecting his imposture? At no period, indeed, could forged books, such as the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles, have been received as authentic, unless all the events which they record, whether natural or supernatural, had been believed, all the principal doctrines received, and all the rites of religion which they prescribed practised, from the very period at which they represent the Son of God as sojourning on earth, laying the foundation of his church, dying on a cross, rising from the dead, and ascending into heaven. The argument cannot, perhaps, be

employed to prove the authenticity of all the Epistles, which make so great a part of the New Testament ; but it is certainly as applicable to some of them as it is to the Gospels, and the book called ‘ the Acts of the Apostles.’

“ ‘The Apostles,’ as Michaëlis justly observes,* ‘ frequently allude, in their Epistles, to the gift of miracles which they had communicated to the Christian converts by the imposition of hands, in confirmation of the doctrine delivered in their speeches and writings, and sometimes to miracles which they themselves had performed.’ Now, if these Epistles are really genuine, the miracles referred to must certainly have been wrought, and the doctrines preached must have been divine ; for no man in his senses would have written to large communities that he had not only performed miracles in their presence, in confirmation of the divine origin of certain doctrines, but that he had likewise communicated to them the same extraordinary endowments. Or if we can suppose any human being to have possessed sufficient effrontery to write in this manner to any community, it is obvious that, so far from gaining credit to his doctrine by such assertions, if not known to be true, he would have exposed himself to the utmost ridicule and contempt, and have ruined the cause which he attempted to support by such absurd conduct.

“ St. Paul’s first Epistle to the Thessalonians is addressed to a Christian church which he had lately founded, and to which he had preached the Gospel only three Sabbath-days. A sudden persecution obliged him to quit this community before he had given to it its proper degree of consistence ; and, what is of consequence in the present instance, he was protected neither by the power of the Magistrate nor the favour of the vulgar. A pretended wonder-worker who has once drawn the populace to his party may easily perform his exploits, and safely proclaim them : But this very populace, at the instigation of the Jews, had excited the insurrection which obliged St. Paul to quit the town. He sends, therefore, to the Thessalonians who had received the Gospel—but whose faith, he apprehended, might waver through persecution—authorities and proofs of his divine mission ; of which authorities the first and the chief are miracles and the gifts of the Holy Ghost.† Is it possible, now, that St. Paul, without forfeiting all pretensions to common sense, could, when writing to a church which he had lately established, have spoken of miracles performed, and gifts of the Holy Ghost communicated, if no member of that church had seen the one, or received the other ; nay, if many members had not witnessed both

* Introduction to the New Testament, chap. 2, sect. 1.

† 1 Thess. i. 5—10. See Hardy’s Greek Testament ; Whitby on the place ; with Schleusner’s and Parkhurst’s Lexicons on the word *δυνάμεις*.

the performance and the effusions of the Holy Ghost? But it is equally impossible that the Epistle, making this appeal to miracles and spiritual gifts, could have been received as authentic if forged in the name of St. Paul at any future period during the existence of a Christian church at Thessalonica. In the two first chapters it represents its author and two of his companions as having been lately in that city, and appeals to the church for the manner in which they had conducted themselves while there, and for the zeal and success with which they had preached the Gospel; and it concludes with these awful words, 'I adjure you' (*ορκίζω υμᾶς*) 'by the Lord, that this Epistle be read unto all the holy brethren;' that is, all the Christians of the community. Had St. Paul, and Timotheus, and Sylvanus never been in Thessalonica, or had they conducted themselves in any respect differently from what they are said to have done in the two first chapters, these chapters would have convicted the author of this Epistle of forgery, at whatever time it had made its first appearance. Had they been actually there, and preached, and wrought miracles, just as they are said to have done, and had some impostor, knowing this, forged the Epistle before us at a considerable distance of time, the adjuration at the end of it must instantly have detected the forgery; every Thessalonian Christian of common sense would have said, 'How came we never to hear of this Epistle before? Its author represents himself and two of his friends as having converted us to the faith a very short time before it was written and sent to us; and he charges those to whom it was immediately sent, in the most solemn manner possible, that they should cause it to be read to every one of us; no Christian in Thessalonica would, in a matter of this kind, have dared to disobey the authority of an Apostle, especially when enforced by so awful an adjuration; and yet neither we nor our fathers ever heard of this Epistle till now that Paul, and Sylvanus, and Timotheus are all dead, and, therefore, incapable of either confirming or refuting its authenticity.' Such an Epistle, if not genuine, could never have been received by any community.

"The same Apostle, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, corrects the abuse of certain spiritual gifts, particularly that of speaking divers kinds of tongues, and prescribes rules for the employment of these supernatural talents; he enters into a particular detail of them, as they existed in the Corinthian church; reasons on their respective worth and excellence; says that they were limited in their duration; that they were no distinguishing mark of divine favour; nor of so great importance as faith and virtue, the love of God, and charity to our neighbours. Now, if this Epistle was really written by St. Paul to the Corinthians, and they had actually received no spiritual gifts, no power, imparted by extraordinary means, of

speaking foreign languages, the proper place to be assigned him were not among impostors, but among those who had lost their understanding. A juggler may deceive by the dexterity of his hands, and persuade the ignorant and the credulous that more than human means are requisite for the performance of his extraordinary feats ; but he will hardly persuade those whose understandings remain unimpaired that he has likewise communicated to his spectators the power of working miracles, and of speaking languages which they had never learned, were they conscious of their inability to perform the one, or to speak the other. If the Epistle, therefore, was written during the life of St. Paul, and received by the Corinthian church, it is impossible to doubt but that St. Paul was its author, and that among the Corinthians were prevalent those spiritual gifts of which he labours to correct the abuse. If those gifts were never prevalent among the Corinthian Christians, and this Epistle was not seen by them until the next age, it could not have been received by the Corinthian church as the genuine writing of the Apostle, because the members of that church must have been aware that if those gifts of which it speaks had been really possessed and so generally displayed by their fathers as it represents them to have been, some of themselves would surely have heard their fathers mention them ; and as the Epistle treats of some of the most important subjects that ever occupied the mind of man,—the introduction of death into the world through Adam, and the resurrection of the dead through Christ,—they must have inferred that their fathers would not have secreted from them, their children, a treatise on topics so interesting to the whole human race.”—Gleig’s edition of STACKHOUSE’S *History of the Bible*, vol. iii., Intro., p. 11, &c.

CHAPTER XIII.

The uncorrupted Preservation of the Books of Scripture.

THE historical evidence of the antiquity and genuineness of the books ascribed to Moses, and those which contain the history of Christ, and the establishment of his religion, being thus complete, the integrity of the copies at present received is the point next in question.

With respect to the Scriptures of the Old Testament: The list of Josephus, the Septuagint translation, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, are sufficient proofs that the books which are received by us as sacred are the same as those received by the Jews and Samaritans long before the Christian era. For the New Testament: Beside the quotations from almost all the books now included in that volume, and references to them by name in the earliest Christian writers, catalogues of authentic Scriptures were published at very early periods, which, says Dr. Paley, “though numerous, and made in countries at a wide distance from one another, differ very little, differ in nothing material, and all contain the four Gospels.

“In the writings of Origen which remain, and in some extracts preserved by Eusebius, from works of his which are now lost, there are enumerations of the books of Scripture, in which the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles are distinctly and honourably specified, and in which no books appear beside what are now received.* The date of Origen’s works is A.D. 230.

“Athanasius, about a century afterwards, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament in form, containing our Scriptures and no others; of which he says, ‘In these

* Lard. Cred., vol. iii., p. 234, *et seq.*; vol. viii., p. 196.

alone the doctrine of religion is taught ; let no man add to them, or take any thing from them.'*

"About twenty years after Athanasius, Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, set forth a catalogue of the books of Scripture publicly read at that time in the church of Jerusalem, exactly the same as ours, except that the Revelation is omitted.†

"And, fifteen years after Cyril, the Council of Laodicea delivered an authoritative catalogue of canonical Scripture, like Cyril's, the same as ours, with the omission of the Revelation.

"Catalogues now become frequent. Within thirty years after the last date, that is, from the year 363 to near the conclusion of the fourth century, we have catalogues by Epiphanius,‡ by Gregory Nazianzen,§ by Philaster, Bishop of Brescia in Italy,|| by Amphilocho, Bishop of Iconium ; all, as they are sometimes called, 'clean' catalogues ; (that is, they admit no books into the number beside what we now receive ;) and all, for every purpose of historic evidence, the same as ours.¶

"Within the same period, Jerome, the most learned Christian writer of his age, delivered a catalogue of the books of the New Testament, recognising every book now received, with the intimation of a doubt concerning the Epistle to the Hebrews alone, and taking not the least notice of any book which is not now received.**

"Contemporary with Jerome, who lived in Palestine, was St. Augustine, in Africa, who published likewise a catalogue, without joining to the Scriptures, as books of authority, any other ecclesiastical writing whatever, and without omitting one which we at this day acknowledge.††

* Lard. Cred., vol. viii., p. 232.

† Ibid., p. 270.

‡ Ibid., p. 368.

§ Ibid., vol. ix., p. 132.

|| Ibid., p. 373.

¶ Epiphanius omits the Acts of the Apostles. This must have been an accidental mistake, either in him, or in some copyist of his work ; for he elsewhere expressly refers to this book, and ascribes it to Luke.

** Lard. Cred., vol. x., p. 77.

†† Ibid., p. 213.

“ And with these concurs another contemporary writer, Rufen, Presbyter of Aquileia, whose catalogue, like theirs, is perfect and unmixed, and concludes with these remarkable words: ‘ These are the volumes which the Fathers have included in the canon, and out of which they would have us prove the doctrine of our faith.’ ”*

This, it is true, only proves that the books are substantially the same; but the evidence is abundant, that they have descended to us without any material alteration whatever.

“ 1. Before that event, [the time of Christ,] the regard which was paid to them by the Jews, especially to the law, would render any forgery or material change in their contents impossible. The law having been the deed by which the land of Canaan was divided among the Israelites, it is improbable that this people, who possessed that land, would suffer it to be altered or falsified. The distinction of the twelve tribes, and their separate interests, made it more difficult to alter their law than that of other nations less jealous than the Jews. Further, at certain stated seasons, the law was publicly read before all the people of Israel; † and it was appointed to be kept in the ark, for a constant memorial against those who transgressed it. ‡ Their King was required to ‘ write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the Priests the Levites, and to read therein all the days of his life; ’ § their Priests also were commanded to ‘ teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by the hand of Moses; ’ || and parents were charged not only to make it familiar to themselves, but also to teach it diligently to their children; ¶ besides which, a severe prohibition was annexed, against either making any addition to, or diminution from, the law. ** Now such precepts as these could not have been given by an impostor who was adding to it, and who would wish men to forget rather than enjoin them to remember it; for, as all

* Lard. Cred., vol. x., p. 187.

† Deut. xxxi. 9—13; Joshua viii. 34, 35; Neh. viii. 1—5.

‡ Deut. xxxi. 26. § Deut. xvii. 18, 19. || Levit. x. 11.

¶ Deut. xvii. 18, 19. ** Deut. iv. 2; xii. 32.

the people were obliged to know and observe the law under severe penalties, they were, in a manner, the trustees and guardians of the law, as well as the Priests and Levites. The people, who were to teach their children, must have had copies of it; the Priests and Levites must have had copies of it; and the Magistrates must have had copies of it, as being the law of the land. Further, after the people were divided into two kingdoms, both the people of Israel and those of Judah still retained the same book of the law; and the rivalry or enmity that subsisted between the two kingdoms prevented either of them from altering or adding to the law. After the Israelites were carried captive into Assyria, other nations were placed in the cities of Samaria in their stead; and the Samaritans received the Pentateuch, either from the Priest who was sent, by order of the King of Assyria, to instruct them in the 'manner of the God of the land,'* or several years afterwards from the hands of Manasseh, the son of Joiada the High Priest, who was expelled from Jerusalem by Nehemiah, for marrying the daughter of Sanballat, the Governor of Samaria; and who was constituted, by Sanballat, the first High Priest of the temple at Samaria.† Now, by one or both of these means, the Samaritans had the Pentateuch as well as the Jews; but with this difference, that the Samaritan Pentateuch was in the old Hebrew or Phenician characters, in which it remains to this day; whereas, the Jewish copy was changed into Chaldee characters, (in which it also remains to this day,) which were fairer and clearer than the Hebrew, the Jews having learned the Chaldee language during their seventy years' abode in Babylon. The jealousy and hatred which subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans made it impracticable for either nation to corrupt or alter the text in any thing of consequence, without certain discovery; and the general agreement between the Hebrew and Samaritan copies of the Pentateuch, which are now extant, is such, as plainly demonstrates that the copies were originally the same. Nor

* 2 Kings xvii. 26.

† Neh. xiii. 28. Josephus, *Ant. Jud.*, lib. xi., c. 8. Bishop Newton's Works, vol. i., p. 23.

can any better evidence be desired, that the Jewish Bibles have not been corrupted or interpolated, than this very book of the Samaritans ; which, after more than two thousand years' discord between the two nations, varies as little from the other as any classic author in less tract of time has disagreed from itself by the unavoidable slips and mistakes of so many transcribers.*

“ After the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, the book of the law and the Prophets was publicly read in their synagogues every Sabbath-day ; † which was an excellent method of securing their purity, as well as of enforcing the observation of the law. The Chaldee paraphrases, and the translation of the Old Testament into Greek, which were afterwards made, were so many additional securities. To these facts we may add, that the reverence of the Jews for their sacred writings is another guarantee for their integrity : So great, indeed, was that reverence, that, according to the statements of Philo and Josephus, ‡ they would suffer any torments, and even death itself, rather than change a single point or iota of the Scriptures. A law was also enacted by them, which denounced him to be guilty of inexpressible sin, who should presume to make the slightest possible alteration in their sacred books. The Jewish Doctors, fearing to add any thing to the law, passed their own notions as traditions or explanations of it ; and both Jesus Christ and his Apostles accused the Jews of entertaining a prejudiced regard for those traditions, but they never charged them with falsifying or corrupting the Scriptures themselves.

“ 2. After the birth of Christ : For, since that event, the Old Testament has been held in high esteem both by Jews and Christians. The Jews also frequently suffered martyrdom for their Scriptures ; which they would not have done, had they suspected them to have been corrupted or altered.

* Dr. Bentley's Remarks on Freethinking, part i., remark 27. Vol. v., p. 144, of Bishop Randolph's *Enchiridion Theologicum*, 8vo., Oxford, 1792.

† Acts xiii. 14, 15, 27 ; Luke iv. 17—20.

‡ Philo, *apud Euseb. de Præp. Evang.*, lib. viii., c. 2. Josephus *contra Apionem*, lib. i., sec. 8.

Besides, the Jews and Christians were a mutual guard upon each other, which must have rendered any material corruption impossible, if it had been attempted ; for if such an attempt had been made by the Jews, they would have been detected by the Christians. The accomplishment of such a design, indeed, would have been impracticable, from the moral impossibility of the Jews (who were dispersed in every country of the then known world) being able to collect all the then existing copies, with the intention of corrupting or falsifying them. On the other hand, if any such attempt had been made by the Christians, it would assuredly have been detected by the Jews : Nor could any such attempt have been made by any other man, or body of men, without exposure both by Jews and Christians. To these considerations it may be added, that the admirable agreement of all the ancient paraphrases and versions, and the writings of Josephus, with the Old Testament as it is now extant, together with the quotations which are made from it in the New Testament, and in the writings of all ages to the present time, forbid us to indulge any suspicion of any material corruption in the books of the Old Testament ; and give us every possible evidence, of which a subject of this kind is capable, that these books are now in our hands genuine and unadulterated.

“ 3. Lastly, the agreement of all the manuscripts of the Old Testament (amounting to nearly eleven hundred and fifty) which are known to be extant, is a clear proof of its uncorrupted preservation. These manuscripts, indeed, are not all entire ; some contain one part, and some another. But it is absolutely impossible that every manuscript, whether in the original Hebrew, or in any ancient version or paraphrase, should or could be designedly altered or falsified in the same passages, without detection either by Jews or Christians. The manuscripts now extant are, confessedly, liable to errors and mistakes from the carelessness, negligence, or inaccuracy of copyists ; but they are not all uniformly incorrect throughout, nor in the same words or passages ; but what is incorrect in one place is correct in another. Although the various readings which have been discovered by learned men, who have applied

themselves to the collection of every known manuscript of the Hebrew Scriptures, amount to many thousands, yet these differences are of so little real moment, that their laborious collations afford us scarcely any opportunities of correcting the sacred text in important passages. So far, however, are these extensive and profound researches from being either trivial or nugatory, that we have, in fact, derived from them the greatest advantage which could have been wished for by any real friend of revealed religion ; namely, the certain knowledge of the agreement of the copies of the ancient Scriptures, now extant in their original language, with each other, and with our Bibles.” *

“ Equally satisfactory is the evidence for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament in any thing material. The testimonies, adduced in the preceding section in behalf of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, are, in a great measure, applicable to show that it has been transmitted to us entire and uncorrupted. But, to be more particular, we remark, that the uncorrupted preservation of the books of the New Testament is manifest,

“ 1. From their contents ; for, so early as the two first centuries of the Christian era, we find the very same facts, and the very same doctrines, universally received by Christians, which we of the present day believe on the credit of the New Testament.

“ 2. Because an universal corruption of those writings was impossible, nor can the least vestige of such a corruption be found in history. They could not be corrupted during the life of their authors ; and before their death, copies were dispersed among the different communities of Christians, who were scattered throughout the then known world. Within twenty years after the ascension, churches were formed in the principal cities of the Roman empire ; and in all these churches, the books of the New Testament, especially the four Gospels, were read as a part of their public worship, just as the writings of Moses and the Prophets were read in the Jewish syna-

* Bishop Tomline's *Elements of Christian Theology*, vol. i., p. 31.

gogues.* Nor would the use of them be confined to public worship ; for these books were not, like the Sybilline Oracles, locked up from the perusal of the public, but were exposed to public investigation. When the books of the New Testament were first published to the world, the Christians would naturally entertain the highest esteem and reverence for writings that delivered an authentic and inspired history of the life and doctrines of Jesus Christ, and would be desirous of possessing such an invaluable treasure. Hence, as we learn from unquestionable authority, copies were multiplied and disseminated as rapidly as the boundaries of the church increased ; and translations were made into as many languages as were spoken by its professors, some of which remain to this day ; so that it would very soon be rendered absolutely impossible to corrupt these books in any one important word or phrase. Now, it is not to be supposed, (without violating all probability,) that all Christians should agree in a design of changing or corrupting the original books ; and if some only should make the attempt, the uncorrupted copies would still remain to detect them. And supposing there was some error in one translation or copy, or something changed, added, or taken away ; yet there were many other copies and other translations, by the help of which the neglect or fraud might be or would be corrected.

“ Further, as these books could not be corrupted during the life of their respective authors, and while a great number of witnesses were alive to attest the facts which they record ; so neither could any material alteration take place after their decease, without being detected while the original manuscripts were preserved in the churches. The Christians, who were instructed by the Apostles or by their immediate successors, travelled into all parts of the world, carrying with them copies of their writings ; from which other copies were multiplied and preserved. Now, as we have already seen, we have an unbroken

* Dr. Lardner has collected numerous instances in the second part of his *Credibility of the Gospel History* ; references to which may be seen in the General Index to his works, article “ *Scriptures*.” See particularly the testimonies of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen, and Augustine.

series of testimonies for the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament, which can be traced backwards, from the fourth century of the Christian era to the very time of the Apostles ; and these very testimonies are equally applicable to prove its uncorrupted preservation. Moreover, Harmonies of the four Gospels were anciently constructed, Commentaries were written upon them, as well as upon the other books of the New Testament, (many of which are still extant,) manuscripts were collated, and editions of the New Testament were put forth. These sacred records, being universally regarded as the supreme standard of truth, were received by every class of Christians with peculiar respect, as being divine compositions, and possessing an authority belonging to no other books. Whatever controversies, therefore, arose among different sects, (and the church was very early rent with fierce contentions on doctrinal points,) the Scriptures of the New Testament were received and appealed to by every one of them, as being conclusive in all matters of controversy ; consequently it was morally impossible, that any man or body of men should corrupt or falsify them in any fundamental article, should foist into them a single expression to favour their peculiar tenets, or erase a single sentence, without being detected by thousands.

“ If any material alteration had been attempted by the orthodox, it would have been detected by the heretics ; and, on the other hand, if an heretic had inserted, altered, or falsified any thing, he would have been exposed by the orthodox, or by other heretics. It is well known that a division commenced in the fourth century, between the eastern and western churches, which, about the middle of the ninth century, became irreconcilable, and subsists to the present day. Now, it would have been impossible to alter all the copies in the eastern empire ; and if it had been possible in the east, the copies in the west would have detected the alteration. But, in fact, both the eastern and western copies agree ; which could not be expected if either of them was altered or falsified. The uncorrupted preservation of the New Testament is further evident,

“3 From the agreement of all the manuscripts. The manuscripts of the New Testament which are extant are far more numerous than those of any single classic author whomsoever ; upwards of three hundred and fifty were collated by Griesbach, for his celebrated critical edition. These manuscripts, it is true, are not all entire ; most of them contain only the Gospels ; others, the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles ; and a few contain the Apocalypse, or Revelation of John. But they were all written in very different and distant parts of the world ; several of them are upwards of twelve hundred years old, and give us the books of the New Testament, in all essential points, perfectly accordant with each other, as any person may readily ascertain by examining the critical editions published by Mill, Kuster, Bengel, Wetstein, and Griesbach. The thirty thousand various readings which are said to be found in the manuscripts collated by Dr. Mill, and the hundred and fifty thousand which Griesbach's edition is said to contain, in no degree whatever affect the general credit and integrity of the text ; in fact, the more copies are multiplied, and the more numerous the transcripts and translations from the original, the more likely is it that the genuine text and the true original reading will be investigated and ascertained. The most correct and accurate ancient classics now extant are those of which we have the greatest number of manuscripts ; and the most depraved, mutilated, and inaccurate editions of the old writers are those of which we have the fewest manuscripts, and perhaps only a single manuscript, extant ; such are Athenæus, Clemens Romanus, Hesychius, and Photius. But of this formidable mass of various readings which have been collected by the diligence of collators, not one tenth, nay, not one hundredth part, either makes, or can make, any perceptible, or, at least, any material, alteration in the sense in any modern version. They consist, almost wholly, of palpable errors in transcription, grammatical and verbal differences, such as the insertion or omission of an article, the substitution of a word for its equivalent, and the transposition of a word or two in a sentence. Even the few that do change the sense affect it only in passages relating to unimportant

historical and geographical circumstances, or other collateral matters; and the still smaller number that make any alteration in things of consequence do not, on that account, place us in any absolute uncertainty; for either the true reading may be discovered by collating the other manuscripts, versions, and quotations found in the works of the ancients; or, should these fail to give us the requisite information, we are enabled to explain the doctrine in question from other undisputed passages of holy writ.

“4. The last testimony to be adduced for the integrity and uncorruptness of the New Testament is furnished by the agreement of the ancient versions and quotations from it which are made in the writings of the Christians of the first three centuries, and in those of the succeeding Fathers of the church.

“The testimony of versions, and the evidence of the ecclesiastical Fathers, have already been noticed as a proof of the genuineness and authenticity of the New Testament. The quotations from the New Testament in the writings of the Fathers are so numerous, that, as it has frequently been observed, the whole body of the Gospels and Epistles might be compiled from the various passages dispersed in their commentaries and other writings. And though these citations were, in many instances, made from memory, yet, being always made with due attention to the sense and meaning, and most commonly with a regard to the words, as well as to the order of the words, they correspond with the original records from which they were extracted; an irrefragable argument, this, of the purity and integrity with which the New Testament has been preserved.”*

* Horne's Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, vol. i., chap 2, sec. 3.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Credibility of the Testimony of the sacred Writers.

THE proofs of the existence and actions of Moses and Christ, the founders of the Jewish and Christian religions, having been adduced, with those of the antiquity and uncorrupted preservation of the records which profess to contain the facts of their history, and the doctrines they taught, the only question to be determined before we examine those miracles and prophecies on which the claim of the divine authority of their mission rests, is, whether these records faithfully record the transactions of which they give us information, and on which the divinity of both systems, the Jewish and the Christian, is built. To deny this because we object to the doctrines taught, is equally illogical and perverse, as it is assuming the doctrine to be false before we have considered all the evidence which may be adduced in its favour: To deny it because we have already determined to reject the miracles, is equally absurd and impious. It has already been proved that miracles are possible; and whether the transactions related as such in the Scriptures be really miraculous or not, is a subsequent inquiry to that which respects the faithful recording of them. If the evidence of this is insufficient, the examination of the miracles is unnecessary; if it is strong and convincing, that examination is a subject of very serious import.

We might safely rest the faithfulness of the scriptural record upon the argument of Leslie, before adduced; but, from the superabundance of evidence which the case furnishes, some amplifications may be added, which we shall confine, principally, to the authors of the New Testament.

There are four circumstances which never fail to give credibility to a witness, whether he depose to any thing orally or in writing:—

1. That he is a person of virtuous and sober character.
2. That he was in circumstances certainly to know the truth of what he relates.
3. That he has no interest in making good the story.
4. That his account is circumstantial.

In the highest degree these guarantees of faithful and exact testimony meet in the Evangelists and Apostles.

That they were persons of strict and exemplary virtue must, by all candid persons, be acknowledged ; so much so, that nothing to the contrary was ever urged against the integrity of their conduct by the most malicious enemies of Christianity. Avarice and interest could not sway them ; for they voluntarily abandoned all their temporal connexions, and embarked in a cause which the world regarded, to the last degree, as wretched and deplorable. Of their sincerity they gave the utmost proof, in the openness of their testimony, never affecting reserve, or shunning inquiry ; they delivered their testimony before Kings and Princes, Priests and Magistrates, in Jerusalem and Judea, where their Master lived and died, and in the most populous, inquisitive, and learned parts of the world, submitting its evidences to a fair and impartial examination.

“ Their minds were so penetrated with a conviction of the truth of the Gospel, that they esteemed it their distinguished honour and privilege to seal their attestation to it by their sufferings, and blessed God that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach and shame for their profession ; ‘ passing through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report, as deceivers and yet true ; ’ never dejected, never intimidated by any sorrows and sufferings they supported ; but when stoned, imprisoned, and persecuted in one city, flying to another, and there preaching the Gospel, with intrepid boldness and heaven-inspired zeal. Patient in tribulation ; fervent in spirit, rejoicing under persecution, calm and composed under calumny and reproach, praying for their enemies ; when in dungeons, cheering the silent hours of night with hymns of praise to God ; meeting death itself, in the most dreadful forms with which persecuting rage could dress it, with a serenity and exultation the Stoic philosophy never

knew. In all these public scenes showing to the world a heart infinitely above what men vulgarly style great and happy, infinitely remote from ambition, the lust of gold, and a passion for popular applause ; working with their own hands to raise a scanty subsistence for themselves, that they might not be burdensome to the societies they had formed ; holding up to all with whom they conversed, in the bright and faithful mirror of their own behaviour, the amiableness and excellency of the religion they taught ; and, in every scene and circumstance of life, distinguished for their devotion to God, their unconquered love for mankind, their sacred regard for truth, their self-government, moderation, humanity, sincerity, and every divine, social, and moral virtue that can adorn and exalt a character. Nor are there any features of enthusiasm in the writings they have left us ; we meet with no frantic fervours indulged, no monkish abstraction from the world recommended, no maceration of the body countenanced, no unnatural institutions established, no vain flights of fancy cherished, no absurd and irrational doctrines taught, no disobedience to any forms of human government encouraged, but all civil establishments and social connexions suffered to remain in the same state they were before Christianity. So far were the Apostles from being enthusiasts, and instigated by a wild undiscerning religious frenzy, to rush into the jaws of death, when they might have honourably and lawfully escaped it, that we find them, when they could, without wounding their consciences, legally extricate themselves from persecution and death, pleading their privileges as Roman citizens, and appealing to Cæsar's supreme jurisdiction."*

As it was contrary to their character to attempt to deceive others, so they could not be deceived themselves ; they could not mistake in the case of the feeding of the five thousand, and the sudden healing of lepers, and lame and blind persons ; they could not but know whether he with whom they conversed for forty days was the same Jesus as he with whom they had daily and familiar intercourse long before his crucifixion ; they

* Harwood's Introduction to the New Testament.

could not mistake as to his ascension into heaven ; as to the fact whether they themselves were suddenly endowed with the power of speaking in languages which they had never acquired ; and whether they were able to work miracles, and to impart the same power to others.

They were not only disinterested in their testimony, but their interests were on the side of concealment. One of the Evangelists, Matthew, occupied a lucrative situation when called by Jesus, and was evidently an opulent man ; the fishermen of Galilee were, at least, in circumstances of comfort, and never had any worldly inducement held out to them by their Master. Nicodemus was a Ruler among the Jews ; Joseph of Arimathea “a rich man ;” and St. Paul, both from his education, connexions, and talents, had encouraging prospects in life ; but of himself and of his fellow-labourers he speaks, and describes all the earthly rewards they obtained for testifying both to Jews and Greeks that Jesus was the Christ : “Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” Finally, they sealed their testimony, in many instances, with their blood ; a circumstance of which they had been forewarned by their Master, and in the daily expectation of which they lived. From this the conclusion of Dr. Paley is irresistible : “These men could not be deceivers. By only not bearing testimony, they might have avoided all their sufferings, and have lived quietly. Would men in such circumstances pretend to have seen what they never saw ; assert facts of which they had no knowledge ; go about lying to teach virtue ; and, though not only convinced of Christ’s being an impostor, but having seen the success of his imposture in his crucifixion, yet persist in carrying it on, and so persist as to bring upon themselves, for nothing, and with a full knowledge of the consequence, enmity and hatred, danger and death ?”

To complete the character of their testimony, it is, in the highest degree, circumstantial. We never find that forged or false accounts of things abound in particularities ; and

where many particulars are related of time, place, persons, &c., there is always a strong presumption of truth ; and on the contrary. Here the evidence is more than presumptive. The history of the Evangelists and of the Acts of the Apostles is so full of reference to persons then living, and often persons of consequence, to places in which miracles and other transactions took place publicly, and not in secret ; and the application of all these facts, by the first propagators of the Christian religion, to give credit to its divine authority, was so frequent and explicit, and often so reproving to their opposers, that, if they had not been true, they must have been contradicted ; and, if contradicted on good evidence, the authors must have been overwhelmed with confusion. This argument is rendered the stronger when it is considered that these things were not done in a corner, nor was the age dark and illiterate, and prone to admit fables. The Augustan age was the most learned the world ever saw. The love of arts, sciences, and literature was the universal passion in almost every part of the Roman empire where Christianity was first taught in its doctrines, and proclaimed in its facts ; and in this inquisitive and discerning era it rose, flourished, and established itself, with much resistance to its doctrines, but without being once questioned as to the truth of its historical facts.

Yet how easily might they have been disproved had they been false,—that Herod the Great was not the Sovereign of Judea when our Lord was born ; that wise men from the east did not come to be informed of the place of his birth ; and that Herod did not convene the Sanhedrim, to inquire where their expected Messiah was to be born ; that the infants in Bethlehem were not massacred ; that, in the time of Augustus, all Judea was not enrolled by an imperial edict ; that Simeon did not take the infant in his arms, and proclaim him to be the expected salvation of Israel, which is stated to have been done publicly in the temple, before all the people ; that the numerous persons, many of whose names are mentioned, and some the relatives of rulers and centurions, were not miraculously healed, nor raised from the dead ; that

the resurrection of Lazarus, stated to have been done publicly, near to Jerusalem, and himself a respectable person, well known, did not occur; that the circumstances of the trial, condemnation, and crucifixion of Christ did not take place as stated by his disciples; in particular, that Pilate did not wash his hands before them, and give his testimony to the character of our Lord; that there was no preternatural darkness from twelve to three in the afternoon on the day of the crucifixion; and that there was no earthquake,—facts which, if they did not occur, could have been contradicted by thousands; finally, that these well-known unlettered men, the Apostles, were not heard to speak with tongues by many who were present in the assembly in which this was said to take place. But we might select almost all the circumstances out of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, and show that, for the most part, they were capable of being contradicted at the time when they were first published; and that the immense number of circumstances mentioned would, in after-times, have furnished acute investigators of the history with the means of detecting its falsehood, had it not been indubitable, either by comparing the different relations with each other, or with some well-authenticated facts of accredited collateral history. On the contrary, the small variations in the story of the Evangelists are confirmations of their testimony, being in proof that there was no concert among them to impose upon the world; and they do not affect, in the least, the facts of the history itself; whilst, as far as collateral, or immediately subsequent, history has given its evidence, we have already seen that it is confirmatory of the exactness and accuracy of the sacred penmen.

For all these reasons, the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are to be taken as a faithful and uncorrupted record of the transactions they exhibit; and nothing now appears to be necessary but that this record be examined, in order to determine its claims to be admitted as the deposit of the standing revelations of the will of God to mankind. The evidence of the genuineness and authenticity of the books of which it is composed,—at least such of them as are neces-

sary to the argument,—is full and complete ; and if certain of the facts which they detail are proved to be really miraculous, and the prophecies they record are, in the proper sense, predictive, then, according to the principles before established, the conclusion must be, that the doctrines which they attest are divine. This shall be the next subject examined ; minor objections being postponed to be answered in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

The Miracles of Scripture.

It has been already proved that miracles are possible, that they are appropriate, necessary, and satisfactory evidences of a revelation from God ; and that, like other facts, they are capable of being authenticated by credible testimony. These points having been established, the main questions before us are, whether the facts alleged as miraculous in the Old and New Testaments have a sufficient claim to that character ; and whether they were wrought in confirmation of the doctrine and mission of the founders of the Jewish and Christian religions.

That definition of a true miracle which we have adopted may here be conveniently repeated :—

A miracle is an effect or event contrary to the established constitution or course of things ; or a sensible suspension or controlment of, or deviation from, the known laws of nature, wrought either by the immediate act, or by the concurrence, or by the permission of God, for the proof or evidence of some particular doctrine, or in attestation of the authority of some particular person.

The force of the argument from miracles lies in this : That as such works are manifestly above human power, and as no created being can effect them unless empowered by the Author of nature, when they are wrought for such an end as that mentioned in the definition, they are to be considered as authentications of a divine mission, by a special and sensible interposition of God himself.

To adduce all the extraordinary works wrought by Moses and by Christ would be unnecessary. In those we select for examination the miraculous character will sufficiently appear to bring them within our definition ; and it will be recollected

that it has been already established, that the books which contain the account of these facts must have been written by their reputed authors ; and that had not the facts themselves occurred as there related, it is impossible that the people of the age in which the accounts of them were published could have been brought to believe them. On the basis, then, of the arguments already adduced to prove these great points, it is concluded that we have in the Scriptures a true relation of the facts themselves. Nothing, therefore, remains but to establish their claims as miracles.

Out of the numerous miracles wrought by the agency of Moses, we select, in addition to those before mentioned in Chapter IX., the plague of darkness. Two circumstances are to be noted in the relation given of this event. (Exodus x.) It continued three days ; and it afflicted the Egyptians only, for "all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings." The fact here mentioned was of the most public kind ; and had it not taken place, every Egyptian and every Israelite could have contradicted the account. The phenomenon was not produced by an eclipse of the sun ; for no eclipse of that luminary can endure so long. Some of the Roman writers mention a darkness by day so great that persons were unable to know each other ; but we have no historical account of any other darkness so long continued as this, and so intense that the Egyptians "rose not up from their places for three days." But if any such circumstance had again occurred, and a natural cause could have been assigned for it, yet even then the miraculous character of this event would remain unshaken ; for to what but to a supernatural cause could the distinction made between the Israelites and the Egyptians be attributed, when they inhabited a portion of the same country, and when their neighbourhoods were immediately adjoining ? Here, then, are the characters of a true miracle. The established course of natural causes and effects is interrupted by an operation upon that mighty element, the atmosphere. That it was not a chance irregularity in nature, is made apparent from the effect following the volition of a man acting in the name of the Lord of nature, and from its being restrained by that to a certain

part of the same country,—“Moses stretched out his hand,” and the darkness prevailed every where but in the dwellings of his own people. The fact has been established by former arguments ; and, the fact being allowed, the miracle follows of necessity.

The destruction of the first-born of the Egyptians may be next considered. Here, too, are several circumstances to be carefully noted. This judgment was threatened in the presence of Pharaoh, before any of the other plagues were brought upon him and his people. The Israelites also were forewarned of it. They were directed to slay a lamb, sprinkle the blood upon their door-posts, and prepare for their departure that same night. The stroke was inflicted upon the first-born of the Egyptians only, and not upon any other part of the family ; it occurred in the same hour ; the first-born of the Israelites escaped without exception ; and the festival of the passover was from that night instituted in remembrance of the event. Such a festival could not in the nature of the thing be established in any subsequent age, in commemoration of an event which never occurred ; and if instituted at the time, the event must have taken place ; for by no means could this large body of men have been persuaded that their first-born had been saved, and those of the Egyptians destroyed, if the facts had not been before their eyes. The history, therefore, being established, the miracle follows ; for the order of nature is sufficiently known to warrant the conclusion, that, if a pestilence were to be assumed as the agent of this calamity, an epidemic disease, however rapid and destructive, comes not upon the threat of a mortal, and makes no such selection as the first-born of every family.

The miracle of dividing the waters of the Red Sea has already been mentioned, but merits more particular consideration. In this event we observe, as in the others, circumstances which exclude all possibility of mistake or collusion. The subject of the miracle is the sea ; the witnesses of it the host of Israel, who passed through on foot, and the Egyptian nation, who lost their King and his whole army. The miraculous characters of the event are,—the waters are divided,

and stand up on each side; the instrument is a strong east wind, which begins its operation upon the waters, at the stretching out of the hand of Moses, and ceases at the same signal, and that at the precise moment when the return of the waters would be most fatal to the Egyptian pursuing army.

It has, indeed, been asked whether there were not some ledges of rocks where the water was shallow, so that an army, at particular times, might pass over; and whether the Etesian winds, which blow strongly all summer from the north-west, might not blow so violently against the sea as to keep it back "on a heap." But if there were any force in these questions, it is plain that such suppositions would leave the destruction of the Egyptians unaccounted for. To show that there is no weight in them at all, let the place where the passage of the Red Sea was effected be first noted. Some fix it near Suez, at the head of the gulf; but if there were satisfactory evidence of this, it ought also to be taken into the account, that formerly the gulf extended at least twenty-five miles north of Suez, the place where it terminates at present.* But the names of places, as well as tradition, fix the passage about ten hours' journey lower down, at Clysma, or the valley of Bedea. The name given by Moses to the place where the Israelites encamped before the sea was divided, was Pihahiroth, which signifies "the mouth of the ridge," or of that chain of mountains which line the western coast of the Red Sea; and as there is but one mouth of that chain through which an immense multitude of men, women, and children, could possibly pass when flying before their enemies, there can be no doubt whatever respecting the situation of Pihahiroth; and the modern names of conspicuous places in its neighbourhood prove, that those by whom such names were given believed that this was the place at which the Israelites passed the sea in safety, and where Pharaoh was drowned. Thus, we have close by Pihahiroth, on the western side of the gulf, a mountain called Attaka, which signifies "deliverance." On the eastern coast opposite is a headland called Ras Musa, or "the Cape

* Lord Valentia's Travels, vol. iii., p. 344.

of Moses;" somewhat lower, Harnam Faraun, "Pharaoh's Springs;" whilst at these places the general name of the gulf itself is Bahr-al-Kolsum, "the Bay of Submersion," in which there is a whirlpool called Birket Faraun, "the Pool of Pharaoh." This, then, was the passage of the Israelites; and the depth of the sea here is stated by Bruce, who may be consulted as to these localities, at about fourteen fathoms, and the breadth at between three and four leagues. But there is no "ledge of rocks;" and as to the Etesian wind, the same traveller observes, "If the Etesian wind blowing from the north-west in summer, could keep the sea as a wall, on the right, of fifty feet high, still the difficulty would remain of building the wall to the left, or to the north. If the Etesian winds had done this once, they must have repeated it many a time before or since, from the same causes." The wind which actually did blow, according to the history, either as an instrument of dividing the waters, or, which is more probable, as the instrument of drying the ground, after the waters were divided by the immediate energy of the divine power, was not a north wind, but an east wind; and, as Dr. Hales observes, "seems to be introduced by way of anticipation, to exclude the natural agency which might be afterwards resorted to for solving the miracle; for it is remarkable, that the monsoon in the Red Sea blows the summer half of the year from the north, and the winter half from the south; neither of which could produce the miracle in question."

The miraculous character of this event is, therefore, most strongly marked. An expanse of water, and that water a sea, of from nine to twelve miles broad, known to be exceedingly subject to agitations, is divided, and a wall of water is formed on each hand, affording a passage on dry land for the Israelites. The phenomenon occurs, too, just as the Egyptian host are on the point of overtaking the fugitives, and ceases at the moment when the latter reach the opposite shore in safety, and when their enemies are in the midst of the passage, in the only position in which the closing of the wall of waters on each side could insure the entire destruction of so large a force!

The falling of the manna in the wilderness for forty years.

is another unquestionable miracle, and one in which there could be neither mistake on the part of those who were sustained by it, nor fraud on the part of Moses. That this event was not produced by the ordinary course of nature, is rendered certain by the fact, that the same wilderness has been travelled by individuals, and by large bodies of men, from the earliest ages to the present, but no such supply of food was ever met with, except on this occasion ; and its miraculous character is further marked by the following circumstances :—1. That it fell but six days in the week. 2. That it fell in such prodigious quantities, as sustained three millions of souls. 3. That there fell a double quantity every Friday, to serve the Israelites for the next day, which was their Sabbath. 4. That what was gathered on the first five days of the week, stank and bred worms, if kept above one day ; but that which was gathered on Friday kept sweet for two days. And, 5. That it continued falling while the Israelites remained in the wilderness, but ceased as soon as they came out of it, and got corn to eat in the land of Canaan.* Let these very extraordinary particulars be considered, and they at once confirm the fact, whilst they unequivocally establish the miracle. No people could be deceived in these circumstances ; no person could persuade them of their truth, if they had not occurred ; and the whole was so clearly out of the regular course of nature, as to mark unequivocally the interposition of God. To the majority of the numerous miracles recorded in the Old Testament, the same remarks apply ; and upon them the same miraculous characters are as indubitably impressed. If we proceed to those of Christ, the evidence becomes, if possible, more indubitable. They were clearly above the power of either human agency or natural causes ; they were public ; they were such as could not admit of collusion or deception ; they were performed under such circumstances as rendered it impossible for the witnesses and reporters of them to mistake ; they were often done in the presence of malignant, scrutinizing, and intelligent enemies,—the Jewish Rulers, who acknowledged the

* *Universa History*, lib. i, c. 7.

facts, but attributed them to an evil supernatural agency ; and there is no interruption in the testimony, from the age in which they were wrought, to this day. It would be trifling with the reader to examine instances so well known in their circumstances ; for the slightest recollection of the feeding of the multitudes in the desert ; of the healing of the paralytic, who, because of the multitude, was let down from the house-top ; the instant cure of the withered hand in the synagogue, near Jerusalem, where the Pharisees were watching our Lord “ whether he would heal on the Sabbath-day ;” of the raising from the dead of the daughter of Jairus, the widow’s son, and Lazarus ; and of many other instances of miraculous power, will be sufficient to convince any ingenuous mind, that all the characters of real and adequately attested miracles meet in them. That great miracle, the resurrection of our Lord himself from the dead, so often appealed to by the first teachers of his religion, may, however, be here properly adduced with its convincing and irrefragable circumstances, as completing this branch of the external evidence.

That it is a miracle in its highest sense for a person, actually dead, to raise himself again to life, cannot be doubted ; and when wrought, as the raising of Christ was, in attestation of a divine commission, it is evidence of the most irrefragable kind. So it has been regarded by unbelievers, who have bent all their force against it ; and so it was regarded by Divine Providence, who rendered its proofs ample and indubitable in proportion to its importance. Let us, then, examine the circumstances, as recorded in the history.

In the first place, the reality of Christ’s death is circumstantially and fully stated ; though, if no circumstantial evidence had been adduced, it is not to be supposed, that they, who had sought his death with so much eagerness, would be inattentive to the full execution of the sentence for which they had clamoured. The execution was public ; he was crucified with common malefactors, in the usual place of execution ; the soldiers brake not his legs, the usual practice when they would hasten the death of the malefactor, observing that he was dead already. His enemies knew that he had predicted

his resurrection, and would therefore be careful that he should not be removed from the cross before death had actually taken place ; and Pilate refused to deliver the body for burial until he had expressly inquired of the officer on duty, whether he were already dead. Nor was he taken away to an unknown or distant tomb. Joseph of Arimathea made no secret of the place where he had buried him. It was in his own family tomb ; and the Pharisees knew where to direct the watch which was appointed to guard the body against the approach of his disciples. The reality of the death of Christ is therefore established.

2. But by both parties, by the Pharisees on the one part, and by the disciples on the other, it was agreed, that the body was missing, and that, in the state of death, it was never more seen ! The sepulchre was made sure, the stone at the mouth being sealed, and a watch of sixty Roman soldiers appointed to guard it ; and yet the body was not to be found. Let us see, then, how each party accounts for this fact. The disciples affirm, that two of their company, going early in the morning to the sepulchre to embalm the body, saw an angel descend and roll away the stone, sit upon it, and invite them to see the place where their Lord had lain, informing them that he was risen, and commanding them to tell the other disciples of the fact ; that others went to the sepulchre, and found not the body, though the grave-clothes remained ; that, at different times, he appeared to them, both separately and when assembled ; that they conversed with him ; that he partook of their food ; that they touched his body ; that he continued to make his appearance among them for nearly six weeks, and then, after many advices, finally led them out as far as Bethany, and, in the presence of them all, ascended into the clouds of heaven. This is the statement of the disciples.

The manner in which the Jewish Sanhedrim accounts for the absence of our Lord's body from the sepulchre is, that, the Roman soldiers having slept on their post, the disciples stole away the corpse. We know of no other account. Neither in their earliest books nor traditions is there any other attempt to explain the alleged resurrection of Jesus. We are warranted

therefore in concluding, that the Pharisees had nothing but this to oppose to the positive testimony of the disciples ; who also added, and published it to the world, that the Roman soldiers related to the Pharisees “ all the things that were done,” the earthquake, the appearance of the angel, &c. ; but that they were bribed to say, “ His disciples came by night and stole him away whilst we slept.”

On the statement of the Pharisees we may remark, that though those who were not convinced by our Lord's former miracles were in a state of mind to resist the impression of his resurrection ; yet, in this attempt to destroy the testimony of the Apostles, they fell below their usual subtlety in circulating a story which carried with it its own refutation. This, however, may be accounted for from the hurry and agitation of the moment, and the necessity under which they were laid to invent something to amuse the populace, who were not indisposed to charge them with the death of Jesus. Of this it is clear that the Pharisees were apprehensive, “ fearing the people,” on this as on former occasions. This appears from the manner in which the Sanhedrim addressed the Apostles : “ Did not we straitly command you, that ye should not teach in this name ? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.” (Acts v. 28.) The majority of the people were not enemies of Jesus, though the Pharisees were ; and it was a mob of base fellows, and strangers, of which Jerusalem was full at the Passover, who had been excited to clamour for his death. The body of the Jewish populace heard him gladly ; great numbers of them had been deeply impressed by the raising of Lazarus, in the very neighbourhood of Jerusalem, and had in consequence accompanied him with public acclamations, as the Messiah, into Jerusalem. These sentiments of the people of Jerusalem towards our Lord were transferred to the Apostles ; for after Peter and John had healed the man at the gate of the temple, and refused to obey the Council in keeping silence as to Christ, when the Chief Priests had “ further threatened them, they let them go, finding not how they might punish them, because of the people.”

It was in a state of considerable agitation, therefore, that this absurd and self-exposed rumour was hastily got up, and as hastily published. We may add, also, that it was hastily abandoned; for it is remarkable, that it is never adverted to by the Pharisees, in any of those legal processes instituted at Jerusalem against the first Preachers of Christ as the risen Messiah, within a few days after the alleged event itself. First, Peter and John are brought before their Great Council; then the whole body of the Apostles twice: On all these occasions they affirm the fact of the resurrection, before the very men who had originated the tale of the stealing away of the body; and in none of these instances did the Chief Priests oppose this story to the explicit testimony of his disciples having seen, felt, and conversed with Jesus, after his passion. This silence cannot be accounted for but on the supposition that, in the presence of the Apostles at least, they would not hazard its exposure. If at any time the Roman guards could have been brought forward effectually to confront the Apostles, it was when the whole body of the latter were in custody, and before the Council, where indeed the great question at issue between the parties was, whether Jesus were risen from the dead, or not. On the one part the Apostles stand before the Rulers affirming the fact, and are ready to go into the detail of their testimony; the only testimony which could be opposed to this is that of the Roman soldiers; but not one of the sixty is brought up, and they do not even advert to the rumour which the Rulers had proclaimed. On the contrary, one of them, Gamaliel, advises the Council to take no further proceedings, but to let the matter go on; for this reason, that if it were of men it would come to nought, but if of God they could not overthrow it, and would be found to fight against God himself. Now it is plain, that if the Pharisees themselves believed in the story they had put into the mouths of the Roman soldiers, no Doctor of the Law, like Gamaliel, would have given such advice; and equally impossible is it that the Council should unanimously have agreed to it. With honest proofs of an imposture in their hands, they could never thus have tamely surrendered the public to delusion, and their own

characters to infamy ; nor, if they had, could they have put their non-interference on the ground assumed by Gamaliel. The very principle of his decision supposes, that both sides acknowledged something very extraordinary, which might prove a work of God ; and that time would make it manifest. It admitted, in point of fact, that Jesus might be risen again. The whole Council, by adopting Gamaliel's decision, admitted this possibility ; or how could time show the whole work built entirely upon this fact, to be a work of God, or not ? And thus Gamaliel, without intending it, certainly, has afforded evidence in favour of the resurrection of our Lord the more powerful from its being incidental.

The absurdity involved in the only testimony ever brought against the resurrection of our Lord, rendered it indeed impossible to maintain the story. That a Roman guard should be found off their watch, or asleep, a fault which the military law of that people punished with death, was most incredible ; that, if they were asleep, the timid disciples of Christ should dare to make the attempt, when the noise of removing the stone and bearing away the body might awaken them, is very improbable ; and, above all, as it has been often put, either the soldiers were awake or asleep,—if awake, why did they suffer a few unarmed peasants and women to take away the body ? and, if asleep, how came they to know that the disciples were the persons ?

Against the resurrection of Christ we may, then, with confidence say, there is no testimony whatever ; it stands, like every other fact in the evangelic history, entirely uncontradicted, from the earliest ages to the present ; and though we grant that it does not follow that, because we do not admit the account given of the absence of our Lord's body from the sepulchre by the Jews, we must therefore admit that of the Apostles ; yet the very inability of those who first objected to the fact of the resurrection to account for the absence of the body, which had been entirely in their own power, affords very strong presumptive evidence in favour of the statement of the disciples. Under such circumstances the loss of the body became itself an extraordinary event. The tomb was

carefully closed, and sealed by officers appointed for that purpose, a guard was set, and yet the body is missing. The story of the Pharisees does not at all account for the fact ; it is too absurd to be for a moment credited ; and unless the history of the Evangelists be admitted, that singular fact remains still unaccounted for.

But, in addition to this presumption, let the circumstances of credibility in the testimony of the disciples be collected, and the evidence becomes indubitable.

The account given by the disciples was not even an improbable one ; for allow the miracles wrought by Christ during his life, and the resurrection follows as a natural conclusion ; for before that event can be maintained to be, in the lowest sense, improbable, the whole history of his public life—in opposition not to the Evangelists merely, but, as we have seen, to the testimony of Jews and Heathens themselves—must be proved to be a fable.

The manner in which this testimony is given is in its favour. So far from the Evangelists having written in concert, they give an account of the transaction so varied, as to make it clear that they wrote independently of each other ; and yet so agreeing in the leading facts, and so easily capable of reconciliation in those minute circumstances in which some discrepancy at first sight appears, that their evidence, in every part, carries with it the air of honesty and truth.

Their own account sufficiently proves that they were incredulous as to the fact when announced, and so not disposed to be imposed upon by an imagination. This, indeed, was impossible ; the appearances of Christ were too numerous, and were continued for too long a time,—forty days. They could not mistake, and it is as impossible that they should deceive ; impossible that upwards of five hundred persons to whom Christ appeared should have been persuaded, by the artful few, that they had seen and conversed with Christ ; or to agree, not only without reward, but in renunciation of all interests, and in hazard of all dangers, and of death itself, to continue the assertion of a falsehood.

Nor did a long period elapse before the fact of the resurrec-

tion was proclaimed ; nor was a distant place chosen in which to make the first report of it. These would have been suspicious circumstances ; but, on the contrary, the disciples testify the fact from the day of the resurrection itself. One of them, in a public speech at the feast of Pentecost, addressed to a mixed multitude, affirms it ; and the same testimony is given by the whole college of Apostles before the Great Council, twice ; this, too, was done at Jerusalem, the scene of the whole transaction, and in the presence of those most interested in detecting the falsehood. Their evidence was given, not only before private, but public, persons, before Magistrates and tribunals, “before philosophers and Rabbies, before courtiers, before lawyers, before people expert in examining and cross-examining witnesses ;” and yet what Christian ever impeached his accomplices ? or discovered this pretended imposture ? or was convicted of prevarication ? or was even confronted with others who could contradict him as to this or any other matter of fact relative to his religion ? To this testimony of the Apostles was added the seal of miracles, wrought as publicly, and being as unequivocal in their nature, as open to public investigation, and as numerous, as those of their Lord himself. The miracle of the gift of tongues was in proof of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ ; and the miracles of healing were wrought by the Apostles in their Master’s name, and therefore were the proofs both of his resurrection and of their commission. Indeed, of the want of supernatural evidence the Jews, the ancient enemies of Christianity, never complained. They allowed the miracles both of Christ and his Apostles ; but, by ascribing them to Satan, and regarding them as diabolical delusions, and wonders wrought in order to seduce them from the law, their admissions are at once in proof of the truth of the gospel history, and enable us to account for their resistance to an evidence so majestic and overwhelming.*

* The evidences of our Lord’s resurrection are fully exhibited in *West on the Resurrection* ; *Sherlock’s Trial of the Witnesses* ; and *Dr. Cook’s Illustration of the Evidence of Christ’s Resurrection*.

CHAPTER XVI.

Objections to the Proof from Miracles considered.

THE first objection to the conclusiveness of the argument in favour of the Mosaic and Christian systems which is drawn from their miracles, is grounded upon facts and doctrines supposed to be found in the Scriptures themselves.

It is stated that the Scriptures assert miraculous acts to have been performed in opposition to the mission and to the doctrine of those who have professed themselves accredited instruments of making known revelations of the will of God to mankind; and that the sacred writers frequently speak of such events as possible, nay, as certain future occurrences, even when they have not actually taken place. The question, therefore, is, how miracles should be conclusive proofs of truth, when they actually have been, or may be, wrought in proof of falsehood. “Shall a miracle confirm the belief of one, and not confirm the belief of more gods than one, if wrought for that purpose?”* The instances usually adduced are the feats of the Egyptian Magi in opposition to Moses, and the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor. The presumptions that such works are considered possible are drawn from a passage of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy; a prediction respecting false Christs in St. Matthew’s Gospel; and the prediction of the “man of sin” in the writings of St. Paul; all of which caution the reader against being seduced from the truth by “signs and wonders” performed by false teachers.

With respect to the miracles, or pretended miracles, wrought by the magicians of Pharaoh, some preliminary considerations are to be noted.

1. That whether the persons called “magicians” were

* Bishop Fleetwood on Miracles.

regular Priests, or a distinct class of men, they were known to be expert in producing singular effects and apparent transformations in natural objects; for after Moses had commenced his marvellous operations, they were sent for by Pharaoh to oppose their power and skill to his.

2. That they succeeded, or appeared to succeed, in three attempts to imitate the works of Moses, and were then controlled, or attempted a work beyond their power, and were obliged to acknowledge themselves vanquished by "the finger of God." The rest of the miracles wrought by Moses went on without any attempt at imitation.

3. That these works, of whatever kind they might be, were wrought to hold up the idols of Egypt as equal in power to Jehovah, the God of Moses and the Israelites. This is a consideration of importance; and the fact is easily proved: If they were mere jugglers, and performed their wonders by sleight of hand, they did not wish the people to know this, or their influence over them could not have been maintained; they therefore used enchantments, incongruous and strange ceremonies, rites, and offerings, which, among all superstitious people, have been supposed to have a powerful effect in commanding the influence of supernatural beings in their favour, and subjecting them to their will. We have an instance of this use of enchantments in the case of Balaam, who lived in the same age; and this example goes very far, we think, to settle the sense in which the Magi used enchantments; for though the original word used is different, yet its ideal meaning is equally capable of being applied to the rites of incantation; and, in this sense, it is confirmed by the whole story.*

* " 'They also did in like manner with their enchantments.' The word לַהֲטִים, *lahatim*, comes from לָהַט, *lahat*, to 'burn,' to 'set on fire;' and probably signifies such incantations as required lustral fires, sacrifices, fumigations, burning of incense, aromatic and odoriferous drugs, &c., as the means of evoking departed spirits, or assistant dæmons, by whose ministry, it is probable, the magicians in question wrought some of their deceptive miracles; for as the term 'miracle' properly signifies something which exceeds the power of nature or art to produce, (see verse 9,) hence there could be no miracle in this case but those wrought through the power of God, by the ministry of Moses and Aaron."—DR. ADAM CLARKE, *in loc.*

Whatever connexion, therefore, may be supposed to exist between the enchantments used and the works performed, or if all connexion be denied, this species of religious rite was performed, and the people understood, as it was intended they should understand, that the wonders which the Magi performed were done under the influence of their deities. The object of Pharaoh and the Magicians was to show that their gods were as powerful as the God who had commissioned Moses ; and that they could protect them from his displeasure, though they should refuse, at the command of his commissioned servant, to let his people go.

But whatever pretence there was of supernatural assistance, it is contended by several writers of great and deserved authority, that no miracles were wrought at all on these occasions ; that, by dexterity and previous preparation, serpents were substituted by the magicians for rods ; that a colouring matter was infused into a portion of water ; and that as frogs, through the previous miracle of Moses, every where abounded in the land of Egypt, a sufficient number might be easily procured to cover some given space ; and they further argue, that when the miracles of Moses became such as to defy the possibility of the most distant imitation, at that point the simulations of the Magi ceased.

The obvious objection to this is, that “ Moses describes the works of the magicians in the very same language as he does his own ; and, therefore, there is reason to conclude that they were equally miraculous.” To this it is replied, that nothing is more common than to speak of professed jugglers as doing what they pretend or appear to do, and that this language never misleads. But it is also stated, and the observation is of great weight, that the word used by Moses is one of great latitude,—“ they did so ; ” that is, in like manner, importing that they attempted some imitation of Moses ; because it is used when they failed in their attempt : “ They did so to bring forth lice ; but they could not.” Further, Mr. Farmer, Dr. Hales, and others, contend that the root of the word translated “ enchantments ” fitly expresses any “ secret artifices or methods of deception, whereby false appearances are imposed upon the

spectators." For a further explanation and defence of this hypothesis, an extract from Farmer's "Dissertation on Miracles" is given, at the end of the chapter.*

Highly as these observations deserve attention, it may be very much doubted, whether mere manual dexterity and sleight-of-hand can sufficiently account for the effects actually produced, if only human agents were engaged ; and it does not appear impracticable to meet any difficulty which may arise out of an admission of supernatural evil agency in the imitation of the three first wonders performed by Moses.

It ought, however, in the first place, to be previously stated, that the history before us is not in fairness to be judged of as an insulated statement, independent of the principles and doctrines of the revelation in which it is found. With that revelation it is bound up, and by the light of its doctrine it is to be judged. No infidel, who would find in Scripture an argument against Scripture, has the right to consider any passage separately, or to apply to it the rule of his own theory on religious subjects, unless he has first, by fair and honest argument, disposed of the evidences of the Scriptures themselves. He must disprove the authenticity of the sacred record, and the truth of the facts contained in it,—he must rid himself of every proof of the divine mission of Moses, and of the evidence of his miracles,—before he is entitled to this right ; and if he is inadequate to this task, he can only consider the case as a difficulty, standing on the admission of the Scriptures themselves, and to be explained, as far as possible, on the principles of that general system of religion which the Scriptures themselves supply. In this nothing more is asked than argumentative fairness. The same rule is still more obligatory upon those interpreters who profess to believe in the divine authority of the sacred records ; for by the aid of their general principles and unequivocal doctrines, every difficulty which they profess to extract from them is surely to be examined, in order to ascertain its real character. What, however, is the real difficulty in the present case, supposing it to be allowed that

* See note A, at the end of the chapter.

the magicians performed works superior to the power of any mere human agent, and, therefore, supernatural? This it is the more necessary to settle, as the difficulty supposed to arise out of this admission has been exaggerated.

It seems generally to have been supposed, that these counter-performances were wrought to contradict the divine mission of Moses ; and that by allowing them to be supernatural, we are brought into the difficulty of supposing, that God may authenticate the mission of his servants by miracles, and that miracles may be wrought also to contradict this attestation, thus leaving us in a state of uncertainty. This view is not, however, at all countenanced by the history. No intimation is given that the magicians performed their wonders to prove that there was no such God as Jehovah, or that Moses was not commissioned by him. For as they did not deny the works of Moses to be really performed, they could no more deny that he did them by the power of his God, than they would deny that they themselves performed their exploits by the assistance of their gods—a point which they doubtless wished to impress upon Pharaoh and the people, and for which both were prepared by their previous belief in their idols, and in the effect of incantations. For to suppose that Pharaoh sent for men to play mere juggling tricks, knowing them to be mere jugglers, seems too absurd to be for a moment admitted ; except, indeed, as some have assumed, that he thought the works of Moses to be sleight-of-hand deceptions, which he might expose by the imitations of his own jugglers. But nothing of this is even hinted at in the history ; and at least the second work of Moses was such as entirely to preclude the idea,—the water became blood throughout the whole land of Egypt. It was not intended by these works of the Egyptian Magi, to oppose the existence of Jehovah ; for there was nothing in polytheism which required it to be denied, that every people had their own local divinities ; nothing, indeed, which required its votaries to disallow the existence of even a supreme Deity, the “ Father of gods and men ;” and that Moses was commissioned by this Jehovah, “ the God of the Hebrews,” to command Pharaoh to let his people go, was in point of fact acknowledged, rather

than denied, by allowing his works, and attempting to imitate them. The argument upon their own principles was certainly as strong for Moses, as for the Egyptian Priests. If their extraordinary works proved them the servants of their gods, the works of Moses proved him to be the servant of his God.

Thus, in this series of singular transactions, was there no evidence from counter-miracles, even should it be allowed that real miracles were wrought, to counteract or nullify the mission of Moses, or to deny the existence, or even to question any of the attributes, of the true Jehovah. All that can be said, is, that singular works, which were intended to pass for miraculous ones, were wrought, not to disprove any thing which Moses advanced, but to prove that the Egyptian deities had power equal to the God of the Jews; in which contest their votaries ultimately failed; that pretension being abundantly refuted by the transcendent nature and number of the works of Moses; and by their being "plagues" from which the objects of their idolatry could not deliver them, and which, indeed, as the learned Bryant has shown, were intended expressly to humble idolatry itself, and put it to open and bitter shame.

If in this instance we see nothing to contravene the evidence of miracles, as attestations of the divine commission of Moses, so in no other case recorded in Scripture. The raising of the spirit of Samuel by the witch of Endor is, indeed, the only instance of any thing approaching to miraculous agency ascribed to an evil spirit; unless we add the power exercised by Satan over Job, and his bearing our Lord through the air and placing him upon an exceeding high mountain. But whether these events were, properly speaking, miraculous, may be more than doubted; and if they were, neither they, nor the raising of Samuel, profess to give any evidence in opposition to the mission of any servant of God, or to the doctrines taught by him. On the contrary, so far are the Scriptures from affording any examples of miracles, either real or simulated, wrought in direct opposition to the mission and theological doctrine of the inspired messengers of God in any age, that in cases where the

authority of the messenger was fairly brought into question, the examples are of a quite different kind. Elijah brought the matter to issue, whether Jehovah or Baal were God; and whilst the Priests of Baal heard neither "voice nor sound" in return to all their prayers, the God of Israel answered his own Prophet by fire, and by that ratified his servant's commission and his own divinity before all Israel. The devils in our Lord's days confessed him to be the Son of the most high God. The damsel possessed with a spirit of divination at Thyatira gave testimony to the mission of the Apostle Paul and his companions. We read of no particular acts performed by Elymas the sorcerer; but, whatever he could perform, when he attempted to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith, he was struck blind. And thus we find that Scripture does nowhere represent miracles to have been actually wrought in contradiction of the authority of any whom God had commissioned to teach his will to mankind.

But that the Scriptures assume this as possible, is argued from Deut. xiii. 1, &c., where the people are commanded not to follow a prophet or dreamer of dreams, who would entice them into idolatry, though he should give them "a sign or wonder, and the sign or wonder come to pass." Here, however, it appears, that not a miracle, but a prophecy of some wonderful event, is spoken of; for this sign or wonder was to come to pass. Nor can the prediction be considered as more than some shrewd and accidental guess, either from himself, or by the assistance of some evil supernatural agency, (a subject we shall just now consider,) but in fact falling short, though in some respects wonderful, of a true prediction; because in the eighteenth chapter of this same book, the fulfilment of the words of a Prophet is made the conclusive proof of his divine commission; nor can we suppose the same writer within the distance of a few sentences to contradict himself.

In Matthew xxiv. 24 it is predicted that false Christs and false prophets shall arise, and show great signs and wonders, calculated to deceive men, though not the elect; and in 2 Thess. ii. 8 and 9, the coming of the "man of sin" is said to be "after the working of Satan with all power, and signs,

and lying wonders." The latter prediction refers unquestionably to the Papacy, and to works wrought to lead men from the true interpretation of the Gospel, though not to annul, in the least, the divine authority of Christ and his Apostles: The former supposes works which, as being wrought by false Christs, are opposed to the commission of our Lord; and is, indeed, the only instance in which a direct contest between the miracles which attest the authority of a divine messenger, and "great signs and wonders" wrought to attest an opposing and contradictory authority, is spoken of. What these "signs and wonders" may be, it is, therefore, necessary to ascertain.

In the Thessalonians they are ascribed to the working of Satan; and in order to bring the general principles of the revelation of the Scriptures to bear upon these its more obscure and difficult parts,—a rule to which we are, in fairness, bound,—it must be observed,

1. That the introduction of sin into the world is ascribed to the malice and seductive cunning of a powerful evil spirit, the head and leader of innumerable others.
2. That when a Redeemer was promised to man, that promise, in its very first annunciation, indicated a long and arduous struggle between Him and these evil supernatural agents.
3. That it is the fact that a powerful contest has been maintained in the world ever since, between truth and error, idolatry, superstition, and will-worship, and the pure and authorized worship of the true God.
4. That the Scriptures uniformly represent the Redeemer and Restorer at the head of one party of men in the struggle, and Satan at the head of the other; each making use of men as their instruments, though consistently with their general free agency.
5. That Almighty God carries on his purposes to win man back to obedience to him by the exhibition of truth with its proper evidences, by commands, promises, threats, chastisements, and final punishments; and that Satan opposes this design by exhibitions of error and false religion, gratifying to the corrupt passions and appetites of men, and especially seeks to influence powerful agents among men, to seduce others by their example, and to destroy the truth by persecu-

tion and force. 6. That the false religions of the Heathen, as well as the corruptions of Christianity, took place under this diabolical influence; and that the idols of the Heathen were not only the devices of devils, but often devils themselves,* made the objects of the worship of men either for their wickedness, or their supposed power to hurt.†

Now, as the objection which we are considering is professedly taken from Scripture, its doctrine on this subject must be explained by itself; and for this reason the above particulars have been introduced; but the inquiry must go farther. These evil spirits are in a state of hostility to the truth, and oppose it by endeavouring to seduce men to erroneous opinions, and a corrupt worship; all their power may therefore be expected to be put forth in accomplishment of their designs; but to what does their power extend? This is an important question, and the Scriptures afford us no small degree of assistance in deciding it.

1. They can perform no work of creation; for this, throughout Scripture, is constantly attributed to God, and is appealed to by him as the proof of his own divinity, in opposition to idols, and to all beings whatever: "To whom will ye liken me or shall I be equal, saith the Holy One? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things."‡ This claim must, of necessity, cut off from every other being the power of creating in any degree; that is, of making any thing out of nothing; for, a being possessing the power to create an atom out of nothing could not want the ability of

* Some of the demons worshipped by Heathens had a benevolent reputation, and these were, no doubt, suggested by the tradition of good angels; others were malignant, and were none other than the evil angels, (devils,) handed down by the same tradition. Thus Plutarch says, "It has been a very ancient opinion that there are malevolent demons, who envy good men, and oppose them in their actions," &c.

† The passion of Satan to be worshipped appears strongly marked in our Lord's temptation: "All these will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." In all ages evil and sanguinary beings have been deified: It was so in the time of Moses; and remains so to this day in India and Africa, where devil-worship is openly professed; in Ceylon nothing is more common; and in many parts of Africa every village has its devil-house.

‡ Isaiah xl. 25, 26.

making a world. Nay, creation, in its lower sense, is, in this passage, denied to any but God ; that is, the forming goodly and perfect natural objects such as the heavens and the earth are replenished with, from a pre-existent matter, as He formed all things from matter unorganized and chaotic. No "sign," therefore, no "wonder," which implies creation, is possible to finite beings ; and whatever power any of them may have over matter, it cannot extend to any act of creation.

2. Life and death are out of the power of evil spirits. The dominion of these is so exclusively claimed by God himself in many passages of Scripture which are familiar, that they need not be cited : "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death." "I kill, and I make alive again." No signs or wonders, therefore, which imply dominion over these (the power to produce a living being, or to give life to the dead) are within the power of evil spirits ; these are works of God.

3. The knowledge of future events, especially of those which depend on free or contingent causes, is not attainable by evil spirits ; this is the property of God, who founds upon it the proof of his Deity, and therefore excludes it from all others : "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."* They cannot, therefore, utter a prediction, in the strict and proper sense ; though, from their great knowledge of human affairs, and their long habits of observation, their conjectures may be surprising, and often accomplished, and so, if uttered by any of their servants, may have, in some cases, the appearance of prophecies.

4. They do not know, certainly, the thoughts and characters of men. "That," as St. Augustine observes, "they have a great facility in discovering what is in the minds of men by the least external sign they give of it, and such as the most sagacious men cannot perceive ;" and that they may have other means of access, too, to the mind, beside these external signs ; and that a constant observation of human character,—to which they are led by their favourite work of temptation,—

* Isaiah xli. 23.

gives them great insight into the character, and tempers, and weakness of individuals, may be granted; but that the absolute, immediate, infallible knowledge of the thoughts and character belongs alone to God, is clearly the doctrine of Scripture: It is the Lord "who searcheth the heart," and "knoweth what is in man;" and in Jeremiah xvii. 9, 10, the knowledge of the heart is attributed exclusively to God alone.

Let all these things, then, be considered, and we shall be able to ascertain, at least in part, the limits within which this evil agency is able to operate in opposing the truth, and in giving currency to falsehood; at least we shall be able to show that the Scriptures assign no power to this "working of Satan" to oppose the truth by such signs and wonders, as many have supposed. In no instance can evil spirits oppose the truth, we do not say by equal or nearly equal miracles and prophecies, but by real ones; of both, their works are but simulations. We take the case of miracles. A creature cannot create: This is the doctrine of Scripture, and it will serve to explain the wonders of the Egyptian Magi. They were, we think, very far above the sleight-of-hand of mere men unassisted; and we have seen that, as idolatry is diabolic, and even is the worship of devils themselves, and the instrument of their opposition to God, the Scriptures suppose them to be exceedingly active in its support. It is perfectly accordant with this principle, therefore, to conclude that Pharaoh's Priests had as much of the assistance of the demons whose ministers they were, as they were able to exert. But, then, the great principles we have just deduced from Scripture oblige us to limit this power; it was not a power of working real miracles, but of simulating them, in order to uphold the credit of idolatry. Now, the three miracles of Moses which were simulated all involved a creating energy: A serpent was created out of the matter of the rod; the frogs, from their immense multitude, appear also to have been created, and blood was formed out of the matter of water: But in the imitations of the Magi there was no creation: We are forbidden by the doctrine of Scripture to allow this; and therefore there

must have been deception, and the substitution of one thing for another ; which, though performed in a manner apparently much above human adroitness, might be very much within the power of a number of invisible and active spirits. Serpents, in a country where they abound, might be substituted for rods ; frogs, which, after they had been brought upon the land by Moses, were numerous enough, might be suddenly thrown upon a cleared place ; and the water, which could only be obtained by digging, (for the plague of Moses was upon all the streams and reservoirs, and the quantity of water being, in consequence, very limited,) might, by their invisible activity, be easily mixed with blood, or a colouring matter. In all this there was something of the imposture of the Priests, and much of the assistance of Satan ; but, in the strict sense, no miracle was wrought by either ; whilst the works of Moses were, from their extent, unequivocally miraculous.

For the reasons we have given, no apparent miracles, wrought in support of falsehood, can for a moment become rivals of the great miracles by which the revelations of the Scriptures are attested. For instance, nothing like that of feeding several thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes can occur, for that supposes creation of the matter and the form of bread and fish ; no giving life to the dead, for the issues from death belong exclusively to God. Accordingly, we find in the signs and wonders wrought by the false prophets and Christs predicted in Matthew, (whether we suppose them mere impostors, or the immediate agents of Satan also,) nothing of this decisive kind to attest their mission. Theudas promised to divide Jordan, and seduced many to follow him ; but he was killed by the Roman troops before he could perform his miracle. Another promised that the walls of Jerusalem should fall down ; but his followers also were put to the sword by Felix. The false Christ Barchocheba raised a large party ; but no miracles of his are recorded. Another arose A.D. 434, and pretended to divide the sea ; but hid himself, after many of his besotted followers had plunged into it, in faith that it would retire from them, and were drowned. Many other false Christs appeared at different times ; but the

most noted was Sabbatai Sevi, in 1666. The delusion of the Jews with respect to him was very great. Many of his followers were strangely affected, prophesied of his greatness, and appeared by their contortions to be under some supernatural influence; but the Grand Seignior having apprehended Sabbatai, gave him the choice of proving his Messiahship by suffering a body of archers to shoot at him, after which, if he was not wounded, he would acknowledge him to be the Messias; or, if he declined this, that he should be impaled, or turn Turk. He chose the latter, and the delusion was dissipated.

Now, whatever signs or wonders might be wrought by any of these, it is clear, from the absence of all record of any unequivocal miracle, that they were either illusions or impostures.

The same course of remark applies to prophecy. To know the future certainly, is the special prerogative of God. The false prophet anticipated by Moses in Deuteronomy, who was to utter wonderful predictions which should come to pass, is not therefore to be supposed to utter predictions strictly and truly, as founded upon an absolute knowledge of the future. A shrewd man may guess happily in some instances, and his conjectures when accomplished may appear to be a sign and a wonder to a people willing to be deceived, because loving the idolatry to which he would lead them. Still further, the Scripture doctrine does not discountenance the idea of an evil supernatural agency working with him; and then the superior sagacity of evil spirits may give to his conjectures, founded upon their own natural foresight of probabilities, a more decided air of prophecy, and thus aid the wicked purpose of seducing men from God's worship. Real and unequivocal prophecy is, however, impossible to them; and indeed we have no instance of any approach to it among the false prophets recorded in the Jewish history. The heathen oracles may afford us also a comment on this. They were exceedingly numerous; many of them were highly celebrated; all professed to reveal the future; some wonderful stories are recorded of them, and it is difficult to refer the whole to the

imposture of Priests, though much of that was ultimately detected. That they kept their credit for two thousand years, and were silenced by the spread of the Gospel, and that almost entirely, before the time of the establishment of Christianity by Constantine, is acknowledged by heathen authors themselves; that they were in many instances silenced by individual Christians, is openly declared in the apologies of the Christian Fathers, so that the Pythonic inspiration could never be renewed;—these are all strong presumptions at least, that in this mockery of the oracle of Sion, this counterfeit of the standing evidence given by prophecy to truth, there was much of diabolical agency, though greatly mingled with imposture.* Nevertheless the ambiguity and obscurity by which the oracles sported with the credulity of the Heathen, and miserably seduced them, often to the most diabolical wickednesses, and yet, in many cases, whatever might happen, preserved the appearance of having told the truth, sufficiently proved the want of a certain and clear knowledge of the future; and, upon the showing of their own writers, nothing was ever uttered by an oracle which, considered as prophecy, can be for a moment put in comparison with the least remarkable of those Scripture predictions which are brought forward in proof of the truth of the Scriptures. When they are brought into comparison, the most celebrated of them appear contemptible.† We may then very confidently conclude that, as Scripture no where represents any signs or wonders as actually wrought to contradict the evidence of the divine commission of Moses, of Christ, and his Apostles; so in those passages in which it supposes that they may occur, and predicts that they will be wrought in favour of falsehood, and, in the case of false Christs, in opposition to the true Messiah, they do not give any countenance to the notion, that either real miracles can be wrought, or real predictions uttered, even by the permission of God, in favour of falsehood; for no

* This subject is acutely and learnedly discussed in *An Answer to M. de Fontenelle's History of Oracles*, translated from the French by a Priest of the Church of England.

† See note B, at the end of the chapter.

permission, properly speaking, can be given to any being to do what he has not a natural power to effect ; and permission in this case, to mean any thing, must imply that God himself wrought the miracles, and gave the predictions, through the instrumentality of a creature it is true, but in fact, that he employed his divine power in opposition to his own truth,—a dishonourable thought, which cannot certainly be maintained. His permission may, however, extend to a license to evil men, and evil spirits too, to employ against the truth, and for the seduction of men, whatever natural power they possess. This is perfectly consistent with the general doctrine of Scripture ; but this permission is granted under rule and limit. Thus the history of Job is highly important, as it shows that evil spirits cannot employ their power against a good man without express permission. An event in the history of Jesus teaches also that they cannot destroy even an animal of the vilest kind, a swine, without the same license. Moral ends too were to be answered in both cases,—teaching the doctrine of providence to future generations by the example of Job ; and punishing the Gadarenes in their property for their violation of the law through covetousness. So entirely are these invisible opposers of the truth and plans of Christ under control ; and as moral ends are so explicitly marked in these instances, they may be inferred as to every other where permission to work evil or injury is granted. In the cases indeed before us, such moral purposes do not entirely rest upon inference, but are made evident from the history. The agency of Satan was permitted in support of idolatry in Egypt, only to make the triumph of the true God over idols more illustrious, and to justify his severe judgments upon the Egyptians. The false prophets anticipated in Deuteronomy were permitted, as it is stated, in order to prove the people. A new circumstance of trial was introduced, which would lead them to compare the pretended predictions of the false prophet, with the illustrious and well-sustained series of splendid miracles by which the Jewish economy had been established,—a comparison which could not fail to confirm rational and virtuous men in the truth, and to render more inexcusable those light and vain persons who

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might be seduced. This observation may also be applied to the case of the false Christs. In certain of these cases there is also something judicial. When men have yielded themselves so far to vice, as to seek error as its excuse, it seems a principle of the divine government to make their sin their punishment. The Egyptians were besotted with their idolatries; they had rejected the clearest evidences of the truth, and were left to the delusions of the demons they worshipped. The Israelites, in those parts of their history to which Moses refers, were passionately inclined to idolatry; they wished any pretence or sanction for it, and were ready to follow every seducer. What they sought, they found,—occasions of going astray, which would have had no effect upon them had their hearts been right with God. The Jews rejected a spiritual Messiah with all the evidences of his mission; but were ready to follow any impostor who promised them victory and dominion; they were disposed therefore to listen to every pretence, and to become the dupes of every illusion. But in no instance was the temptation either irresistible, or even strong, except as it was made so by their own violent inclinations to evil, and proneness to find pretences for it. In all the cases here supposed, the temptation to error was never present but in circumstances in which it was confronted with the infinitely higher evidence of truth, and that not merely in the number or greatness of the miracles and predictions, but in the very nature of the signs themselves,—one being unquestionably miraculous, the other being at best strange and surprising without a decided miraculous or prophetic character. The sudden and unperceived substitution of serpents for the rods of the magicians might, if the matter had ended there, have neutralized the effect of the real transformation of Aaron's rod; but then the serpent of Moses swallowed up the others. When frogs were already over all the land of Egypt, the imitation must have been confined to some spot purposely freed from them, and for that reason did not bear an unequivocal character; nor could the turning of water from a well into blood (no difficult matter to pretend) rival for an instant the conversion of the waters of the mighty Nile, and the

innumerable channels and reservoirs fed by it, into that offensive substance. To these we are to add the miracles which followed, and which obliged even the magicians to confess the finger of God. To the people whom the false prophet spoken of in Deuteronomy should attempt to lead astray from the law, all its magnificent evidences were known; the glory of God was then between the cherubim; the Urim and Thummim gave their responses; and the government was a standing miracle. To those who followed false Christs, the evidences of the mission of Jesus were known; his unequivocal miracles, it is singular, were never denied by those very Jews who, ever looking out for deception, cried, as to the expected Christ, "Lo, he is here, and, lo, he is there!" The working of Satan, and the lying wonders mentioned in the Thessalonians, were to take place among a people, who not only had the words of Christ and his Apostles, but who acknowledged too their divine authority as established by miracles and prophecies, the unequivocal character of which theirs never even pretended to equal. Thus, in none of the instances adduced in the argument, was there an exposure to inevitable error, by any evidence in favour of falsehood; the evidence of the truth was in all these cases at hand, and presented itself under an obviously distinct and superior character. We conclude, therefore, that the objection to the conclusive nature of the proof of the truth of the Scriptures from miracles and prophecies, grounded upon the supposed admission that miracles may be wrought and prophecies uttered in favour of error, is not only without foundation, but, as far as scriptural evidence goes on this subject, the demonstrative nature of real miracles and prophecies is, by what it really admits as to the working of Satan, abundantly confirmed. It does not admit that real miracles can be wrought, or real prophecies uttered; and it never supposes simulated ones, when opposed to revealed truth, but under circumstances in which they can be detected, or which give them an equivocal character, and in which they may be compared with true miracles and predictions, so that none can be deceived by them but those who are violently bent on error and transgression.

Another objection to the conclusiveness of the proof from miracles is brought from the pretended heathen miracles of Aristeas, Pythagoras, Alexander of Pontus, Vespasian, and Apollonius Tyanæus, and from accounts of miracles in the Romish Church; but as this objection has been very feebly urged by the adversaries of Christianity, as though they themselves were ashamed of the argument, our notice of it shall be brief. For a full consideration of the objection we refer to the authors mentioned below.*

With respect to most of these pretended miracles, we may observe, that it was natural to expect that pretences to miraculous powers should be made under every form of religion, since the opinion of the earliest ages was in favour of the occurrence of such events; and as truth had been thus sanctioned, it is not surprising that error should attempt to counterfeit its authority. But they are all deficient in evidence. Many of them are indeed absurd, and carry the air of fable; and as to others, it is well observed by Dr. Macknight,† that “they are vouched to us by no such testimony as can induce a prudent man to give them credit. They are not reported by any eye-witnesses of them, nor by any persons on whom they were wrought. Those who relate them do not even pretend to have received them from eye-witnesses; we know them only by vague reports, the original of which no one can exactly trace. The miracles ascribed to Pythagoras were not reported until several hundred years after his death; and those of Apollonius, one hundred years after his death.” Many instances which are given, especially among the Papists, may be resolved into imagination; others, both popish and pagan, into the artifice of Priests, who were of the ruling party, and therefore feared no punishment even upon detection; and, in almost all cases, we find that they were performed in favour of the dominant religion, and before persons whose religious prejudices were to be flattered and strengthened by them, and, of course, persons very much disposed to

* Macknight's *Truth of the Gospel History*; Douglas's *Criterion*; Campbell on *Miracles*; and Paley's *Evidences*.

† *Truth of the Gospel History*

become dupes. Bishop Douglas has laid down the following decisive and clear rules in his *Criterion* for trying miracles : That we may reasonably suspect any accounts of miracles to be false, if they are not published till long after the time when they are said to have been performed ; or if they were not first published in the place where they are said to have been wrought ; or if they probably were suffered to pass without examination, in the time when, and at the place where, they took their rise. These are general grounds of suspicion, to which may be added particular ones, arising from any circumstances which plainly indicate imposture and artifice on the one hand, or credulity and imagination on the other.

Before such tests all pagan, popish, and other pretended miracles, without exception, shrink ; and they are not for a moment to be brought into comparison with works wrought publicly, in the sight of thousands, and those often opposers of the system to be established by them ; works not by any ingenuity whatever to be resolved into artifice on the one part, or into the effects of imagination on the other ; works performed before scholars, statesmen, rulers, persecutors ; of which the instances are numerous, and the places in which they occurred various ; works published at the time, and on the very spot ; works not in favour of a ruling system, but directed against every other religious establishment under heaven ; and, for giving their testimony to which, the original witnesses had therefore to expect, and did in succession receive, reproach, stripes, imprisonment, and death.

It is also of importance to observe, that, whatever those pretended miracles might be, whether false or exaggerated relations, or artful impostures ; or even were we to admit some of them to have been occurrences of an extraordinary and inexplicable kind ; they are for the most part, whether pagan or papal, a sort of insulated occurrences, which do not so much as profess to prove any thing of common interest to the world. As they are destitute of convincing marks of credibility, so they have no inherent propriety, nor any perceptible connexion with a design of importance to mankind. But “ the Scriptures of the Old Testament record a continued succession of won-

derful works, connected also in a most remarkable manner with the system carried on from the fall of Adam to the coming of Christ. The very first promise of a Redeemer, who should bruise the serpent's head, appears to have been accompanied with a signal miracle, by which the nature of the serpent tribe was instantly changed, and reduced to a state of degradation and baseness, expressive of the final overthrow of that evil spirit, through whose deceits man had fallen from his innocence and glory. The mark set upon Cain was probably some miraculous change in his external appearance, transmitted to his posterity, and serving as a memorial of the first apostasy from the true religion. The general deluge was a signal instance of miraculous punishment inflicted upon the whole human race, when they had departed from the living God, and were become utterly irreclaimable. The dispersion at Babel, and the confusion of tongues, indicated the divine purpose of preventing an intermixture of idolaters and Atheists with the worship of the true God. The wonders wrought in Egypt, by the hand of Moses, were pointedly directed against the senseless and abominable idolatries of that devoted country, and were manifestly designed to expose their absurdity and falsehood, as well as to effect the deliverance of God's people Israel. The subsequent miracles in the desert had an evident tendency to wean the Israelites from an attachment to the false deities of the surrounding nations, and to instruct them by figurative representations in that 'better covenant, established upon better promises,' of which the Mosaic institute was designed to be a shadow and a type. The settlement of the Israelites in Canaan under their leader Joshua, and their continuance in it for a long succession of ages, were accompanied with a series of wonders, all operating to that one purpose of the Almighty, the separation of his people from a wicked and apostate world, and the preservation of a chosen seed, through whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Every miracle wrought under the Jewish Theocracy appears to have been intended, either to correct the superstitions and impieties of the neighbouring nations, and to bring them to a conviction that the Lord Jehovah was the true

God, and that beside him there was none other ; or to reclaim the Jews, whenever they betrayed a disposition to relapse into heathenish abominations, and to forsake that true religion which the Almighty was pledged to uphold throughout all ages, and for the completion of which he was then, in his infinite wisdom, arranging all human events.

“In the miracles which our Lord performed, he not only evinced his divine power, but fulfilled many important prophecies relating to him as the Messiah. Thus they afforded a two-fold evidence of his authority. In several of them we perceive likewise a striking reference to the especial object of his mission. Continually did he apply these wonderful works to the purpose of inculcating and establishing doctrines, no less wonderful and interesting to the sons of men.

“The same may likewise be remarked of the miracles recorded of the Apostles, after our Lord’s departure from this world, in none of which do we find any thing done for mere ostentation ; but an evident attention to the great purpose of the Gospel, that of ‘turning men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.’

“It seems impossible for any thinking man to take such a view as this of the peculiar design and use of the Scripture miracles, and not to perceive in them the unerring counsels of infinite wisdom, as well as the undoubted exertions of infinite power. When we see the several parts of this stupendous scheme thus harmonizing and co-operating for the attainment of one specific object, of the highest importance to the whole race of mankind, we cannot but be struck with a conviction of the absolute impossibility of imposture or enthusiasm in any part of the proceeding. We are compelled to acknowledge that they exhibit proofs of divine agency, carried on in one continued series ; such as no other system hath ever pretended to ; such as not only surpasses all human ingenuity, but seems impossible to have been effected by any combination of created beings.”*

On miracles, therefore, like those which attest the mission

* Van Mildert’s Boyle Lectures.

of Moses and of Christ, we may safely rest the proof of the authority of both, and say to each of them, though with a due sense of the superiority of the Son to the servant, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

NOTE A.—PAGE 218.

IN reply to the objection that "Moses describes the works of the magicians in the very same language as he does his own, and therefore that there is reason to conclude that they were equally miraculous," Dr. Farmer remarks,

"1. That nothing is more common than to speak of professed jugglers as doing what they pretend and appear to do, and that this language never misleads when we reflect what sort of men are spoken of, namely, mere impostors on the sight; why might not Moses, then, use the common popular language when speaking of the magicians, without any danger of misconstruction, inasmuch as the subject he was treating, all the circumstances of the narrative, and the opinion which the historian was known to entertain of the inefficacy and imposture of magic, did all concur to prevent mistakes?

"2. Moses does not affirm that there was a perfect conformity between his works and those of the magicians; he does not close the respective relations of his own particular miracles with saying, The magicians did that thing, or, According to what he did so did they,—a form of speech used on this occasion no less than three times in one chapter, to describe the exact correspondence between the orders of God and the behaviour of his servants,—but makes choice of a word of great latitude, such as does not necessarily express any thing more than a general similitude, such as is consistent with a difference in many important respects: 'They did so, or in like manner as he had.' That a perfect imitation could not be designed by this word, is evident from its being applied to cases in which such an imitation was absolutely impracticable; for when Aaron had converted all the waters of Egypt into blood, we are told the magicians did so, that is, something in like sort. Nor can it be supposed that they covered the land of Egypt with frogs; this had been done already; they could only appear to bring them over some small space cleared for the purpose. But, what is more decisive, the word imports nothing more than their attempting some imitation of Moses;

for it is used when they failed in their attempt: 'They did so to bring forth lice, but they could not.'

" 3. So far is Moses from ascribing the tricks of the magicians to the invocation and power of demons, or to any superior beings whatever, that he does most expressly refer all they did or attempted in imitation of himself to human artifice and imposture. The original words which are translated 'enchantments,'* are entirely different from that rendered 'enchantments' in other passages of Scripture, and do not carry in them any sort of reference to sorcery or magic, or the interposition of any spiritual agents; they import deception and concealment, and ought to have been rendered 'secret sleights,' or 'jugglings,' and are thus translated even by those who adopt the common hypothesis with regard to the magicians. These secret sleights and jugglings are expressly referred to the magicians, not to the devil, who is not so much as mentioned in the history. Should we, therefore, be asked † how it came to pass, in case the works of the magicians were performed by sleight-of-hand, that Moses has given no hint hereof; we answer, He has not contented himself with a hint of this kind, but, at the same time that he ascribes his own miracles to Jehovah, he has, in the most direct terms, resolved every thing done in imitation of them entirely to the fraudulent contrivances of his opposers,—to legerdemain or sleight-of-hand, in contradistinction from magical incantations. Moses, therefore, could not design to represent their works as real miracles at the very time he was branding them as impostures.

" It remains only to show that the works performed by the magicians did not exceed the cause to which they are ascribed; or, in other words, the magicians proceeded no farther in imitation of Moses than human artifice might enable them to go; while the miracles of Moses were not liable to the same impeachment, and bore upon themselves the plainest signatures of that divine power to which they are referred. If this can be proved, the interposition

* The original word used, Exodus viii. 11, is *belahatehem*; and that which occurs chap. vii. 22, and chap. viii. 7, 18, is *belatehem*. The former is probably derived from *lahat*, which signifies to "burn," and the substantive a "flame," or "shining sword-blade," and is applied to the flaming sword which guarded the tree of life, Gen. iii. 24. Those who formerly used legerdemain dazzled and deceived the sight of spectators by the art of brandishing their swords, and sometimes seemed to eat them and thrust them into their bodies; and the expression seems to intimate, that the magicians appearing to turn their rods into serpents was owing to their eluding the eyes of the spectators by a dexterous management of their swords. In the preceding instances they made use of some different contrivance; for the latter word, *belatehem*, comes from *laat*, to "cover," or "hide," (which some think the former word also does,) and therefore fitly expresses any secret artifices, or methods of deception, whereby false appearances are imposed upon the spectators.

† As we are by Dr. Macknight, in his *Truth of the Gospel History*, p. 372.

of the devil on this occasion will appear to be an hypothesis invented without any kind of necessity, as it certainly is without any authority from the sacred text.

“ 1. With regard to the first attempt of the magicians,—the turning rods into serpents,—it cannot be accounted extraordinary that they should seem to succeed in it, when we consider that these men were famous for the art of dazzling and deceiving the sight; and that serpents, being first rendered tractable and harmless, as they easily may, have had a thousand different tricks played with them, to the astonishment of the spectators.

“ 2. With regard to the next attempt of the magicians to imitate Moses, who had already turned all the running and standing waters of Egypt into blood, there is no difficulty in accounting for their success in the degree in which they succeeded; for it was during the continuance of this judgment, when no water could be procured but by digging round about the river, that the magicians attempted, by some proper preparations, to change the colour of the small quantity that was brought them; probably endeavouring to persuade Pharaoh that they could as easily have turned a larger quantity into blood. In a case of this nature imposture might and, as we learn from history, often did take place. It is related by Valerius Maximus,* that the wine poured into the cup of Xerxes was three times changed into blood. But such trifling feats as these could not at all disparage the miracle of Moses; the vast extent of which raised it above the suspicion of fraud, and stamped upon every heart that was not steeled against all conviction, the strongest impression of its divinity; for he turned their streams, rivers, ponds, and the water in all their receptacles into blood; and the fish that was in the river (Nile) died; and the river stank.†

“ 3. Pharaoh not yielding to this evidence, God proceeded to farther punishments, and covered the whole land of Egypt with frogs.‡ Before these frogs were removed the magicians undertook to bring, into some place cleared for the purpose, a fresh supply; which they might easily do when there was such plenty every where at hand. Here, also, the narrow compass of the work exposed it to the suspicion of being effected by human art; to which the miracle of Moses was not liable; the infinite number of frogs which filled the whole kingdom of Egypt, so that their ovens, beds, and tables swarmed with them, being a proof of their immediate miraculous production.

* Lib. i, c. 6.

† Exodus vii. 19—21.

‡ Exodus viii. 6—8. Nor, indeed, can it be imagined that, after this or the former plague had been removed, Pharaoh would order his magicians to renew either.

Besides, the magicians were unable to procure their removal, which was accomplished by Moses at the submissive application of Pharaoh, and at the very time that Pharaoh himself chose; the more clearly to convince him that God was the author of these miraculous judgments, and that their infliction or * removal did not depend upon the influence of the elements or stars, at set times or in critical junctures.

“4. The history of the last attempt of the magicians confirms the account here given of all their former ones. Moses turned all the dust of the land into lice; and this plague, like the two preceding ones, being inflicted at the word of Moses, and extended over the whole kingdom of Egypt, must necessarily have been owing, not to human art, but to a divine power. Nevertheless, the motives upon which the magicians at first engaged in the contest with Moses, the shame of desisting, and some slight appearances of success in their former attempts, prompted them still to carry on the imposture, and to try with their enchantments to bring forth lice; but they could not. With all their skill in magic, and with all their dexterity in deceiving the spectators, they could not even succeed so far as they had done in former instances, by producing a specious counterfeit of this work of Moses. Had they hitherto performed real miracles by the assistance of the devil, how came they to desist now? It cannot be a greater miracle to produce lice than to turn rods into serpents, water into blood, and to create frogs. It has, indeed, been very often said that the devil was now laid under a restraint: But hitherto no proof of this assertion has been produced; the Scripture is silent both as to the devil being now restrained from interposing any farther in favour of the magicians, and as to his having afforded them his assistance on the former occasions. But if we agree with Moses in ascribing to the magicians nothing more than the artifice and dexterity which belonged to their profession, we shall find that their want of success in their last attempt was owing to the different nature and circumstances of their enterprise.”

NOTE B.—PAGE 228.

“But if, at any time, evil spirits, by subtlety, and experience, and knowledge of affairs in the world, did foretel things which accordingly came to pass, they were things that happened not long after, and commonly such as themselves did excite and prompt men to. Thus, when the conspiracy against Cæsar was come just to be put into execution, and the devil had his agents concerned in it, he

could foretel the time and place of his death. But it had been foretold to Pompey, Crassus, and Cæsar himself, before,—as Tully informs us from his own knowledge,—that they should all die in their beds, and in an honourable old age, who yet all died violent deaths. Wise and observing men have sometimes been able to make strange predictions concerning the state of affairs; and therefore spirits may be much more able to do it. Evil spirits could foretel what they were permitted to inflict or procure; they might have foretold the calamities of Job, or the death of Ahab at Ramoth-gilead.

“The devil could not always foretel what was to come to pass, and therefore his agents had need of their vaults, and hollow statues, and other artifices, to conceal their ignorance, and help them out when their arts of conjuration failed. But we have no reason to think that the devil, who is so industrious to promote his evil ends by all possible means, would omit such an opportunity as was given him by the opinion which the Heathens had of their oracles; and the trials which Cræsus and Trajan made are sufficient to prove that there was something supernatural and diabolical in them. Cræsus sent to have many oracles consulted at a set time, and the question to be put to them was, what Cræsus himself at that time was doing; and he resolved to be employed about the most improbable thing that could be imagined, for he was boiling a tortoise and a lamb together in a brass pot; and yet the oracle of Delphi discovered to the messengers what the King was then about. Trajan, when he was going into Parthia, sent a blank paper sealed up to an oracle of Assyria for an answer; the oracle returned him another blank paper, to show that it was not so to be imposed upon.

“But though things of present concernment were discovered both to Cræsus and Trajan beyond all human power to know, yet both were imposed upon by ambiguous answers when they consulted about things future, of which the devil could not attain the knowledge.

“Many of the heathen Priests themselves, upon examination, publicly confessed several of their oracles to be impostures, and discovered the whole contrivance and management of the deceit, which was entered upon record. And in the rest the power of the devil was always so limited and restrained as to afford sufficient means to undeceive men, though many of his predictions might come to pass.”—JENKIN'S *Reasonableness of Christianity*.

“Many of the learned regard all the heathen oracles as the result of the grossest imposture; some consider them as the work of evil spirits; others are of opinion that, through these oracles, some real prophecies were occasionally vouchsafed to the gentile world, for

their instruction and consolation. But to whichever of these opinions we may incline, it will not be difficult to discover a radical difference between these and the Scripture prophecies.

“In the heathen oracles we cannot discern any clear and unequivocal tokens of genuine prophecy. They were destitute of dignity and importance, had no connexion with each other, tended to no object of general concern, and never looked into times remote from their own. We read only of some few predictions and prognostications, scattered among the writings of poets and philosophers, most of which, besides being very weakly authenticated, appear to have been answers to questions of merely local, personal, and temporary concern, relating to the issue of affairs then actually in hand, and to events speedily to be determined. Far from attempting to form any chain of prophecies respecting things far distant as to time or place, or matters contrary to human probability, and requiring supernatural agency to effect them, the heathen Priests and soothsayers did not even pretend to a systematic and connected plan; they hardly dared, indeed, to assume the prophetic character in its full force, but stood trembling, as it were, on the brink of futurity, conscious of their inability to venture beyond the depths of human conjecture; hence their predictions became so fleeting, so futile, so uninteresting, that they were never collected together as worthy of preservation, but soon fell into disrepute and almost total oblivion.

“The Scripture prophecies, on the other hand, constitute a series of predictions relating principally to one grand object of universal importance,—the work of man’s redemption,—and carried on in regular progression through the patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian dispensations, with a harmony and uniformity of design clearly indicating one and the same divine Author, who alone could say, ‘Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.’ The genuine Prophets of the Almighty beheld these things with a clear and steadfast eye; they declared them with authority and confidence; and they gave, moreover, signs from heaven, for the conviction of others. Accordingly, their writings have been handed down from age to age; have been preserved with scrupulous fidelity; and have ever been regarded with reverence, from the many incontestable evidences of their accomplishment, and from their inseparable connexion with the religious hopes and expectations of mankind.”—BISHOP OF LLANDAFF.

CHAPTER XVII.

Prophecies of Scripture.

THE nature and force of the argument from prophecy have been already stated ; * and it has been proved, that where real predictions are uttered,—not happy conjectures, which shrewd and observing men may sometimes make, but predictions which imply foresight of events dependent upon the various contingencies of human affairs, and a knowledge of the characters, dispositions, and actions of persons yet unborn, so as to decide unerringly on the conduct which they will pursue,—they can only be uttered by inspired men, and the author of such communications can be no other than the infinite and omniscient God, “showing to his servants the things which shall be hereafter,” in order to authenticate their mission, and to affix the stamp of his own infallible authority upon their doctrine.

The authenticity and the antiquity of the records which contain these predictions have been already established ; and the only subject of inquiry proper to this chapter is, the prophetic character of the predictions said to be contained in the Old and New Testaments. A few general observations may, however, be previously allowed.

1. The instances to be considered, by those who would fully satisfy themselves on this point, are not few, but many. The believer in the divine authority of the Old and New Testaments is ready to offer for examination great numbers of professed prophecies relative to individuals, cities, states, the person and offices of Messiah, and the Christian church, which he alleges to have been unequivocally fulfilled ; independent of predictions which he believes to be now fulfilling, or which are hereafter to be fulfilled in the world.

▪ Vide chapter ix.

2. If as to the fulfilment of some particular prophecies, the opinions of men should differ, there is an abundance of others the accomplishment of which has been so evident as to defy any rational interpretation which will not involve their fulfilment; whilst unbelievers are challenged to show any clear prediction of holy Scripture that has been falsified by the event, throughout the whole range of those ages which are comprehended by the Bible, from the Pentateuch to the Apocalypse.

3. The predictions in Scripture have already been distinguished in their character from the oracles and divinations of the Heathen;* and it may here be further observed, that they are not, generally, separate and insulated predictions of the future, arising out of accidental circumstances, and connecting themselves with merely individual interests and temporary occasions. On the contrary, they chiefly relate to, and arise out of, a grand scheme for the moral recovery of the human race from ignorance, vice, and wretchedness. They speak of the agents to be employed in it, and especially of the great Agent, the Redeemer himself; and of those mighty and awful proceedings of Providence as to the nations of the earth, by which judgment and mercy are exercised with reference both to the ordinary principles of moral government, and especially to this restoring economy, to its struggles, its oppositions, and its triumphs. They all meet in Christ, as in their proper centre, and in him only, however many of the single lines, when considered apart, may be imagined to have another direction, and though they may pass through intermediate events. "If we look," says Bishop Hurd, "into the prophetic writings, we find, that prophecy is of a prodigious extent; that it commenced from the fall of man, and reaches to the consummation of all things; that for many ages it was delivered darkly, to a few persons, and with large intervals from the date of one prophecy to that of another; but, at length, became more clear, more frequent, and was uniformly carried on in the line of one people, separated from the rest of the world, among other

* Vide chapter xvi.

reasons assigned, for this principally, to be the repository of the divine oracles ; that, with some intermission, the spirit of prophecy subsisted among that people to the coming of Christ ; that he himself and his Apostles exercised this power in the most conspicuous manner, and left behind them many predictions, recorded in the books of the New Testament, which profess to respect very distant events, and even run out to the end of time, or, in St. John's expression, to that period ' when the mystery of God shall be perfected.' Further, beside the extent of this prophetic scheme, the dignity of the Person whom it concerns deserves our consideration. He is described in terms which excite the most august and magnificent ideas. He is spoken of, indeed, sometimes as being ' the seed of the woman,' and as ' the Son of man ;' yet so as being at the same time of more than mortal extraction. He is even represented to us, as being superior to men and angels ; as far above all principality and power ; above all that is accounted great, whether in heaven or in earth ; as the Word and Wisdom of God ; as the eternal Son of the Father ; as the Heir of all things, by whom he made the worlds ; as the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person. We have no words to denote greater ideas than these ; the mind of man cannot elevate itself to nobler conceptions. Of such transcendent worth and excellence is that Jesus said to be, to whom all the Prophets bear witness !

“ Lastly, the declared purpose for which the Messiah, prefigured by so long a train of prophecy, came into the world, corresponds to all the rest of the representation. It was not to deliver an oppressed nation from civil tyranny, or to erect a great civil empire ; that is, to achieve one of those acts which history accounts most heroic. No ; it was not a mighty state, a victor people,—

Non res Romanæ perituraque regna,—

that was worthy to enter into the contemplation of this divine Person. It was another and far sublimer purpose, which he came to accomplish ; a purpose, in comparison of which all

our policies are poor and little, and all the performances of man as nothing. It was to deliver a world from ruin ; to abolish sin and death ; to purify and immortalize human nature ; and thus, in the most exalted sense of the words, to be the Saviour of men and the blessing of all nations. There is no exaggeration in this account. I deliver the undoubted sense, if not always the very words, of Scripture. Consider, then, to what this representation amounts. Let us unite the several parts of it, and bring them to a point. A spirit of prophecy pervading all time, characterising one Person, of the highest dignity, and proclaiming the accomplishment of one purpose, the most beneficent, the most divine, the imagination itself can project. Such is the scriptural delineation, whether we will receive it or no, of that economy which we call prophetic."

4. Prophecy in this peculiar sense, and on this ample scale, is restricted to the religious system of the holy Scriptures. Nothing like it is found any where beside ; and it accords perfectly with that system, that nothing similar should be found elsewhere. "The prophecies of Scripture," says that accomplished scholar, Sir W. Jones, "bear no resemblance in form or style to any that can be produced from the stores of Grecian, Indian, Persian, or even Arabian learning. The antiquity of those compositions no man of learning doubts ; and the unrestrained application of them to events long subsequent to their publication is a solid ground of belief that they were genuine predictions, and consequently inspired." The advantage of this species of evidence belongs then exclusively to our revelation. Heathenism never made any clear and well-founded pretensions to it. Mahometanism, though it stands itself as a proof of the truth of Scripture prophecy, is unsupported by a single prediction of its own. "To the Christian only belongs this testimony of his faith ; this growing evidence gathering strength by length of time, and affording from age to age fresh proofs of its divine origin. As a majestic river expands itself more and more the farther it removes from its source, so prophecy, issuing from the first promise in Paradise as its fountain-head, acquired additional strength and fulness as it

rolled down successive ages, and will still go on increasing in extent and grandeur, until it shall finally lose itself in the ocean of eternity."

5. The objection which has been raised to Scripture prophecy from its supposed obscurity, has no solid foundation. There is, it is true, a prophetic language of symbol and emblem; but it is a language which is definite and not equivocal in its meaning, and as easily mastered as the language of poetry, by attentive persons. This, however, is not always used. The style of the prophecies of Scripture very often differs in nothing from the ordinary style of the Hebrew poets; and, in not a few cases, and those too on which the Christian builds most in the argument, it sinks into the plainness of historical narrative. Some degree of obscurity is essential to prophecy; for the end of it was not to gratify human curiosity, by a detail of future events and circumstances; and too great clearness and speciality might have led to many artful attempts to fulfil the predictions; and so far the evidence of their accomplishment would have been weakened. The two great ends of prophecy are, to excite expectation before the event, and then to confirm the truth by a striking and unequivocal fulfilment; and it is a sufficient answer to the allegation of the obscurity of the prophecies of Scripture, that they have abundantly accomplished those objects, among the most intelligent and investigating, as well as among the simple and unlearned, in all ages. It cannot be denied, for instance, leaving out particular cases which might be given, that by means of these predictions the expectation of the incarnation and appearance of a divine Restorer was kept up among the people to whom they were given, and spread even to the neighbouring nations; that as these prophecies multiplied, the hope became more intense; and that at the time of our Lord's coming, the expectation of the birth of a very extraordinary person prevailed, not only among the Jews, but among other nations. This purpose was then sufficiently answered, and an answer is given to the objection. In like manner prophecy serves as the basis of our hope in things yet to come; in the final triumph of truth and righteousness on

earth, the universal establishment of the kingdom of our Lord, and the rewards of eternal life to be bestowed at his second appearing. In these all true Christians agree ; and their hope could not have been so uniformly supported in all ages and under all circumstances, had not the prophecies and predictive promises conveyed with sufficient clearness the general knowledge of the good for which they looked, though many of its particulars be unrevealed. The second end of prophecy is, to confirm the truth by the subsequent event ; and here the question of the actual fulfilment of Scripture prophecy is involved, to which we shall immediately advert. We only now observe, that it is no argument against the unequivocal fulfilment of several prophecies, that many have doubted or denied what the believers in Revelation have on this subject so strenuously contended for. How few of mankind have read the Scriptures with serious attention, or been at the pains to compare their prophecies with the statements in history ! How few, especially of the objectors to the Bible, have read it in this manner ! How many of them have confessed unblushingly their unacquaintance with its contents, or have proved what they have not confessed by the mistakes and misrepresentations into which they have fallen ! As for the Jews, the evident dominion of their prejudices ; their general averseness to discussion ; and the extravagant principles of interpretation they have adopted for many ages, which set all sober criticism at defiance, render nugatory any authority which might be ascribed to their denial of the fulfilment of certain prophecies in the sense adopted by Christians. We may add to this, that among Christian critics themselves there may be much disagreement. Eccentricities and absurdities are found among the learned in every department of knowledge, and much of this waywardness and affectation of singularity has infected interpreters of Scripture. But after all, there is a truth and reason in every subject, which the understandings of the generality of men will apprehend and acknowledge whenever it is fully understood and impartially considered ; to this in all such cases the appeal can only be made, and here it may be made with confidence.

6. For want of a right apprehension of the meaning of somewhat an unfortunate term which has obtained in theology, the "double sense" of many prophecies, an objection of another kind has been raised, as though no definite meaning could be assigned to the prophecies of Scripture. Nothing can be more unfounded. "The double sense of many prophecies in the Old Testament," says an able writer, "has been made a pretext by ill-disposed men, for representing them as of uncertain meaning, and resembling the ambiguity of the pagan oracles. But whoever considers the subject with due attention, will perceive how little ground there is for such an accusation. The equivocations of the heathen oracles manifestly arose from their ignorance of future events, and from their endeavours to conceal that ignorance by such indefinite expressions, as might be equally applicable to two or more events of a contrary description. But the double sense of the Scripture prophecies, far from originating in any doubt or uncertainty, as to the fulfilment of them in either sense, springs from a foreknowledge of their accomplishment in both; whence the prediction is purposely so framed as to include both events, which, so far from being contrary to each other, are typical the one of the other, and are thus connected together by a mutual dependency or relation. This has often been satisfactorily proved, with respect to those prophecies which referred, in their primary sense, to the events of the Old Testament, and, in their further and more complex signification, to those of the New; and on this double accomplishment of some prophecies is grounded our firm expectation of the completion of others, which remain yet unfulfilled in their secondary sense, but which we justly consider as equally uncertain in their issue as those which are already past. So far, then, from any valid objection lying against the credibility of the Scripture prophecies, from these seeming ambiguities of meaning, we may urge them as additional proofs of their coming from God. For, who but the Being that is infinite in knowledge and in counsel could so construct predictions as to give them a two-fold application, to events distant from, and (to human foresight) unconnected with, each other? What power less than

divine could so frame them, as to make the accomplishment of them, in one instance, a solemn pledge and assurance of their completion in another instance, of still higher and more universal importance? Where will the scoffer find any thing like this in the artifices of heathen oracles, to conceal their ignorance, and to impose on the credulity of mankind?"

We now proceed to the enumeration of a few out of the great number of predictions contained in the Scriptures, which most unequivocally show a perfect knowledge of future contingent events, and which therefore, according to our argument, as certainly prove that they who uttered them "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," by the Spirit of the omniscient and infinitely prescient God.*

* "The correspondences of types and antitypes, though they are not proper proofs of the truth of a doctrine, yet may be very reasonable confirmations of the foreknowledge of God; of the uniform view of Providence under different dispensations; of the analogy, harmony, and agreement, between the Old Testament and the New. The words of the law concerning one particular kind of death, 'He that is hanged is accursed of God,' can hardly be conceived to have been put in on any other account, than with a view and foresight to the application made of it by St. Paul. The analogies between the paschal lamb and the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world; between the Egyptian bondage and the tyranny of sin; between the baptism of the Israelites in the sea and in the cloud, and the baptism of Christians; between the passage through the wilderness, and through the present world; between Joshua bringing the people into the promised land, and Jesus Christ being the Captain of salvation to believers; between the Sabbath of rest promised to the people of God in the earthly Canaan, and the eternal rest promised to the people of God in the heavenly Canaan; between the liberty granted them from the time of the death of the High Priest, to him that had fled into a city of refuge, and the redemption purchased by the death of Christ; between the High Priest entering into the holy place every year with the blood of others, and Christ's once entering with his own blood into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us;—these, I say, and innumerable other analogies, between the shadows of things to come, of good things to come, the shadows of heavenly things, the figures for the time then present, patterns of things in the heavens, and the heavenly things themselves, cannot without the force of strong prejudice, be conceived to have happened by mere chance, without any foresight or design. There are no such analogies, much less such series of analogies, found in the books of mere enthusiastic writers living in such remote ages from each other. It is much more credible and reasonable to suppose, what St. Paul affirms, that 'these things were our examples;' and that in that uniform course of God's government of the world, 'all

The very first promise made to man is a prediction which none could have uttered but He whose eye looks through the depths of future ages, and knows the result as well as the beginning of all things: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." In vain is it attempted to resolve the whole of the transaction with which this prediction stands connected into allegory. Such criticism, if applied to any other ancient historical book, bearing marks of authentic narration as unequivocal as the Book of Genesis, would not be tolerated by the advocates of this absurd conception themselves, whether they are open or disguised infidels. In vain is it alleged, that a mere fact of natural history is stated; for if the words are understood to express no more than the enmity between the human race and serpents, it would require to be proved, in order to establish a special punishment of the serpent, that man has a greater hostility to serpents than to other dangerous animals, which he extirpates whenever he can master them by force or stratagem; and that serpents have a stronger disposition to do injury to men, than to those animals which they make their daily prey, or to others which they never fail to strike when within their reach. As this was obviously false in fact, Moses could not assert it; and, if it had been true in natural history, to have said this and nothing more, to have confined himself to the mere literal fact, a fact of no importance, would have been far below the character of Moses as a writer,—a lofty and sublime character, to which Heathens and sometimes infidels themselves have done justice. In no intelligible sense can these celebrated words be understood, but in that in which they are fixed by innumerable references and allusions of other parts of the sacred volume, and which ought, in all good criticism, to

things happened unto them of old for ensamples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.' And hence arises that aptness of similitude, in the application of several legal performances to the morality of the Gospel, that it can very hardly be supposed not to have been originally intended."—**DR. S. CLARKE'S** *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, p. 263.

determine their meaning. The serpent, and the seed of the woman, are the representatives of two invisible and mighty powers ; the one good, the other evil ; the one divine, though incarnate of the woman, the other diabolic ; betwixt whom an enmity was placed, which was to express itself in a long and fearful struggle, in the course of which the seed of the woman should sustain a temporary wound and suffering, but which should issue in the bruising of the head, the inflicting a fatal blow upon the power, of his adversary. The scene of this contest was to be our globe ; and generally the visible agents of it men, under their respective leaders, the serpent on the one side, and the seed of the woman on the other, practising and advocating, and endeavouring to render dominant, truth or error, virtue or vice, obedience to God or rebellion against his authority. We ask then, Has such a contest of principles and powers taken place in the world or not ? The answer must be in the affirmative ; for every age bears witness to it. We see it commencing in Cain and Abel ; in the resistance of the antediluvians to the righteousness taught by Noah ; in their punishment ; in the rise of idolatry, and the struggles of the truth in opposition to it ; in the inflictions of singular judgments upon nations, for the punishment and exposure of idolatry, as in the plagues of Egypt, the destruction of the nations of Canaan, &c. We trace the contest throughout the whole history of the Jewish nation down to the coming of our Lord ; and occasionally we see it extending into the neighbouring pagan nations, although they were generally, as a part of their punishment, suffered to walk in their own ways, and Satan, as to them, was permitted to keep his goods in peace, till the time of gracious visitation should arrive. We see the incarnate Redeemer, for a time suffering, and at length dying. Then was “ the hour and power of darkness ;” then was his heel bruised ; but he died only to revive again, more visibly and powerfully to establish his kingdom and to commence his spiritual conquests. In every direction were the regions, where Satan had his seat, penetrated by the heavenly light of the doctrine of Christ ; and every where the most tremendous persecutions were excited against its unarmed

and unprotected Preachers and their converts. But the gates of hell prevailed not against the church founded on a rock, and Satan fell as lightning from heaven,—from the thrones, and temples, and judgment-seats, and schools of the ancient civilized world; the idolatry of ages was renounced; Christ was adored through the vast extent of the Roman empire, and in many of the countries beyond even its ample sweep. Under other forms the enemy revived, and the contest was renewed; but in every age it has been maintained. The principles of pure evangelical truth were never extinguished; and the “children of the kingdom” were “minished and brought low,” only to render the renewal of the assault by unexpected agents, singularly raised up, more marked and more eminently of God. We need not run over even the heads of the history of the church: What is the present state of things? The contest still continues, but with increasing zeal on the part of Christians, who are carrying on offensive operations against the most distant parts of the long-undisturbed kingdom of darkness; placing there the principles of truth; commencing war upon idolatry and superstition; and establishing the institutions of the Christian church with a success which warrants the hope that the time is not far distant, when the head of the serpent will be bruised in all idolatrous countries, and the idols of modern heathen states, like those of old, be displaced, to introduce the worship of the universal Saviour, “God over all blessed for ever.”

May we not ask, whether all this was not infinitely above human foresight? Who could confidently state, that a contest of this peculiar nature would continue through successive ages; that men would not all go over to one or other of the opposing parties? Nay, in the age of Moses,—when the tendency to idolatry had become so strong, that the chosen seed themselves, under the constant demonstration of miracles, visibly blessed whilst they remained faithful to the worship of God, and as eminently and visibly punished when they departed from it, could not be preserved from the infection,—who could confidently conjecture that idolatry should one day be abolished throughout the earth? Past experience and all

probabilities were opposed to the hope that the cause of the Seed of the woman should prevail ; and yet it stands recorded, “ It,” rather *he*, “ shall bruise thy head.” Infidels may scoff at a Redeemer, and deride the notion of a tempter ; but they cannot deny that such a contest betwixt opposite parties and principles as is here foretold has actually taken place, and still continues ; that contest, so extended, so continued, and so terminated, human foresight could not foretel ; and the fact established, therefore, is an accomplishment of a prophecy which could originate only in divine prescience.

The celebrated prediction of Jacob, at the close of his life, respecting the time of the appearing of Shiloh, may next be considered.

The word signifies “ He who is to be sent,” or “ the Peacemaker :” In either sense, the application to that great Person to whom all the Patriarchs looked forward, and the Prophets gave witness, is obvious. Those who doubt this are bound to give us a better interpretation. Before a certain event, a certain person was to come, to whom the people should be gathered : The event has certainly arrived, but who is the person ? The application of the prophecy to Messiah is not an invention of Christians. The ancient Jews, as appears from their commentators, so understood it ; and the modern ones are unable to resist the evidence drawn from it, in favour of the claims of our Lord. That it is a prediction, is proved from its form, and the circumstances under which it was delivered ; that it has received a singular accomplishment in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, is also certain ; and it is equally certain that no individual besides can be produced, in whom it has been in any sense whatever accomplished. For the ample illustration of the prophecy, the reader is referred to commentators, and to Bishop Newton’s well-known work on the prophecies. It is sufficient here to allege, that Judah, as a tribe, remained till after the advent of Jesus Christ ; which cannot be said of the long-dispersed ten tribes, and scarcely of Benjamin, which was merged in the tribe of Judah. Chubb asks where the supremacy of Judah was, when Nebuchadnezzar carried the whole nation captive to Babylon ; when Alexander

subdued Palestine ; and when it was a tributary province of the Roman empire. The prediction, however, does not convey the idea either of independent or supreme power. This no one tribe had when all were united in one state, and each had its sceptre and its Princes or Chiefs. It is therefore enough to show, that, under all its various fortunes, the tribe of Judah retained its ensigns, and its Chiefs, and its tribeship, until Shiloh came. It is no uncommon thing for a country to be conquered, and for its ancient Princes and government to remain, though as tributary.

With respect to the tribe of Judah during the captivity in Babylon, Cyrus, as we learn from Ezra i. 8, ordered the vessels of the temple to be restored to "the Prince of Judah." This shows that the tribe was kept distinct ; and that it had its own internal government and Chief. Under the dominion of the Asmonean Kings, the Jews had their Rulers, their Elders, and their Council, and so under the Romans. But soon after the death of Christ, all this was abolished, the nation dispersed, and the tribes utterly confounded. Till our Lord came, and had accomplished his work on earth, the tribe of Judah continued. This is a matter of unquestionable historic fact. In a short time afterwards it was dispersed, and mingled with the common mass of Jews of all tribes and countries. This is equally unquestionable. Now, again, we ask, Could either human foresight determine this, or is the application of the event to the prophecy fanciful ? The prediction was uttered in the very infancy of the state of Israel, by the father of the fathers of the tribes of that people. Ages passed away ; the mightiest empires were annihilated ; ten of the chosen tribes themselves were utterly dispersed into unknown countries ; another became so insignificant as to lose its designation ; only one remained, which imposed its very name upon the nation at large, the object of public observation until the Messiah came ; and that tribe was Judah, the tribe spoken of in the prediction ; and it remained as it were only to make the fulfilment manifest, and was then confounded with the relics of the rest. What prescience of countless contingencies, occurring in the intervening ages, does this imply ! A prescience, truly, which can only belong to God.

The predictions respecting the Jewish nation, commencing with those of Moses, and running through all their Prophets, are too numerous to be adduced. One of the most instructive and convincing exercises to those who have any doubt of the inspiration of the Scriptures, would be, seriously and candidly to peruse them, and, by the aid of those authors who have expressly and largely written on this subject, to compare the prophecies with their alleged fulfilment. Three topics are prominent in the predictions of Moses and the Prophets generally,—the frequent and gross departures of the Jews from their own law ; their signal punishment in invasions, captivities, dispersions, oppressions, and persecutions ; and their final restoration to their own land. All these have taken place. Even the last was accomplished by the return from Babylon ; though, in its eminent sense, it is still future. In pursuance of the argument, we shall show, that each of these was above human foresight and conjecture.

The apostasies and idolatries of this people were foretold by Moses before his death : “ I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will befall you in the latter days ;” (Deut. xxxi. 29 ;) and he accordingly prophetically declares their punishment. It is, perhaps, scarcely possible to fix upon a stronger circumstance than this prediction, to prove that Moses was truly commissioned by God, and did not pretend a divine sanction in order to give weight to his laws and to his personal authority. The rebellious race whom he had first led into the desert, had died there ; and the new generation were much more disposed to obey their leader. At the moment he wrote these words, appearances had a favourable aspect on the future obedience of the people. If this had not been the case, the last thought which a merely political man would have been disposed to indulge was, that his own favourite institutions would fall into desuetude and contempt ; and much less would he finish his public life by openly telling the people that he foresaw that event, even if he feared it. It may, indeed, be said, that he uttered this conviction for the purpose of giving a colour to the threatenings

which he pronounces against disobedience to his law, and that the object of those fearful menaces was to deter the people from departing from customs and rules which he was anxious, for the sake of his own fame, that they should observe. To this we answer, that Moses could not expect any weight to be attached by the Israelites to his threat, that the divine judgments would be inflicted upon them for not obeying his laws, unless their former rebellions had been immediately and signally marked by such visitations. Without this to support him, he would have appeared in a ridiculous, rather than an impressive and sublime, attitude before the people assembled to hear his last commands. For forty years his institutions had been often disobeyed ; and if no inflictions of the divine displeasure followed, what reason had they to credit the menaces of Moses as to the future ? But if such inflictions had resulted from their disobedience, every thing is rational and consistent in this part of the conduct of their leader. Let the infidel choose which of these positions he pleases. If he think that Moses aimed to deter them from departing from his institutions by empty threats, he ascribes an incredible absurdity to an unquestionably wise, and, as infidels themselves contend, a very politic, man ; but if his predictive threats were grounded upon former marked and acknowledged interpositions of divine Providence, (the only circumstance which could give them weight,) he was God's commissioned leader, and, as he professed, an inspired Prophet.

It is a circumstance of great weight in the predictions of Moses respecting the punishment of the Jews, that these famines, pestilences, invasions, subjugations to foreign enemies, captivities, &c., are represented solely as the consequences of their vicious departures from God, and from his laws. Now, who could foresee, except an inspired man, that such evils would in no instance take place ; that no famine, no blight, no invasion would occur in Judea, except in obvious punishment of their offences against their law ? What was there in the common course of things to prevent a small state, though observant of the precepts of its own religion, from falling under the dominion of more powerful neighbouring

nations, except the special protection of God? And what but this could guard them from the plagues and famines to which their neighbours were liable? If the predictions of Moses were not inspired, they assume a principle which mere human wisdom or policy never takes into its calculations,—that of the connexion of the national prosperity of a people, inseparably and infallibly, with obedience to their holy writings; and because they assume that singular principle, the conclusion is in favour of their inspiration. For let us turn to the facts of the case: The sacred books of the Jews are historical as well as prophetic; the history, too, is distinct from the prophecy, it is often written by other authors, and there is no mark at all of any designed accommodation of the one to the other; the singular simplicity of the historic narrative disproves this, as well as the circumstance that a great part of it, as recorded in the Old Testament, is a transcript of their public records. Consult, then, this history, and in every instance of singular calamity we see a previous departure from the law of Moses; the one following the other, almost with the regularity and certainty of natural effects and causes. In this the predictions of Moses and the Prophets are strikingly accomplished; and a more than human foresight is proved.

Let us look farther into the detail of these threatened punishments. Beside the ordinary inflictions of failing harvests and severe diseases in their own country, they were, according to the prophecies of Moses, (Deut. xxviii.,) to be “scattered among all people, from the one end of the earth even to the other;” and where is the trading nation in which they are not, in Asia, Africa, and Europe? Many are even to be found in the West Indies, and in the commercial parts of America. Who could foresee this but God; especially when their singular preservation as a distinct people—a solitary instance in the history of nations—is also implied? * They were to find

* “They have been dispersed among all countries; they have no common tie of locality or government to keep them together. All the ordinary principles of assimilation which make law, and religion, and manners so much a matter of geography, are, in their instance, suspended. And, in exception

no ease among these nations ; and the almost constant and long-continued persecutions, robberies, and murder of Jews, not only in ancient nations, but especially among Christian nations of the middle ages, and in the Mahometan states to this day, are in wonderful accomplishment of this. They were to be “a proverb and a bye-word among all nations ;” which has been in every place fulfilled, but was surely above human intelligence to foresee. And “the stranger that is within thee shall get above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low :” For a comment on this, let the conduct of the stranger Turks and others, who inhabit Palestine, towards the Jews who remain there be recollected ; the one party is indeed “very high,” and the other “very low.” Other parts of this singular chapter present equally striking predictions, uttered more than three thousand years ago, as remarkably accomplished ; but there are some passages in it which refer, in terms so particular, to a then distant event,—the utter subversion of their polity and nation by the Romans,—as to demonstrate, in the most unequivocal manner, the prescience of Him to whom all events, the most contingent, minute, and distant, are known with absolute certainty. That the Romans are intended in verse 49, by the nation brought from “the end of the earth,” distinguished by their well-known ensign the “eagle,” and by their fierce and cruel disposition, is exceedingly probable ; and it is remarkable, that the account which Moses gives of the horrors of the siege of which he speaks, is exactly paralleled by those well-known passages in Josephus in which he describes the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman army. The last verse of the chapter seems, indeed, to fix the reference of the foregoing passages to the final destruction of the nation by the Romans, and, at the same time, contains a prediction, the accomplishment of which cannot possibly be ascribed to accident : “And the Lord shall bring thee into

to every thing which history has recorded of the revolutions of the species, we see, in this wonderful race, a vigorous principle of identity, which has remained in undiminished force for nearly two thousand years, and still pervades every shred and fragment of their widely-scattered population.”—*CHALMERS'S Evidences.*

Egypt again with ships, by the way whereof I spake unto thee ; thou shalt see it no more again ; and there ye shall be sold unto your enemies for bondmen and bondwomen, and no man shall buy you." On this Dr. Hales remarks, on the authority of their own national historian, Josephus, "Of the captives taken at the siege of Jerusalem, above seventeen years of age, some were sent to Egypt in chains, the greater part were distributed through the provinces, to be destroyed in the theatres by the sword, and by wild beasts ; the rest, under seventeen, were sold for slaves, and that for a trifling sum, on account of the numbers to be sold, and the scarcity of buyers ; so that, at length, the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled,—‘and no man shall buy.’ The part that were reserved to grace the triumph of Vespasian, were probably transported to Italy in ships, or by sea, to avoid a prodigious land-journey thither through Asia and Greece ; a circumstance which distinguished this invasion and captivity from the preceding by the Assyrians and Babylonians. In the ensuing rebellion a part of the captives were sent by sea to Egypt, and several of the ships were wrecked on the coast."

Thus, at a distance of fifteen centuries, were these contingent circumstances accurately recorded by the prophetic spirit of Moses,—the taking of innumerable Jews captive, their transport to Egypt, their being sold till the markets for slaves were glutted, and no more buyers were found, and embarked on board vessels, either to grace the triumph of their conqueror, or to find a market in different maritime ports. Is it possible that these numerous and minute circumstances can be referred to either happy conjectures or human foresight ?

But Moses and other Prophets agree that, after all their captivities and dispersions, the Jews shall be again restored to their own land. This was, as we have said, in one instance, accomplished, in their restoration by Cyrus and his successors ; after which they again became a considerable state. But who could foretel that but He who determines the events of the world by his power and wisdom ? Jeremiah fixes the duration of the captivity to seventy years ; he did that so unequi-

vocally, that the Jews in Babylon, when the time approached, began to prepare for the event. But there was nothing in the circumstances of the Babylonian empire, when the prediction was uttered, to warrant the hope, much less to support a confident conjecture. Could the subversion of that powerful empire by a then obscure people—the circumstance which broke the bondage of the Jews—have been foreseen by man? Or, when we consider the event as fulfilling so distinct a prophecy, can it be resolved into imaginative interpretation? A future restoration, however, awaits this people; and will be to the world a glorious demonstration of the truth of prophecy. This being future, we cannot argue upon it. Three things are, however, certain: The Jews themselves expect it; they are preserved, by the providence of God, a distinct people, for their country; and their country, which, in fact, is possessed by no one, is preserved for them.

Without noticing numerous prophecies respecting ancient nations and cities,* the wonderful and exact accomplishment

* No work has exhibited in so pleasing and comprehensive a manner the fulfilment of the leading prophecies of Scripture, and especially of the Old Testament, as Bishop Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*; and the perusal of it may be earnestly recommended, especially to the young. His illustrations of the prophecies respecting ancient Babylon are exceedingly interesting and satisfactory; and still further proofs of the wonderfully exact accomplishment of those prophecies may be seen in a highly interesting *Memoir on the Ruins of Babylon*, by Claudius J. Rich, published in 1815. Immense ruins were visited by him near the supposed site of ancient Babylon; which probably are, though the matter cannot be certainly ascertained, the remains of that astonishing city, now indeed swept with the besom of destruction. He tells us, too, that the neighbourhood is to the present a habitation only for birds and beasts of prey; that the dens of lions, with their slaughtered victims, are to be seen in many places; and that most of the cavities are occupied with bats and owls. It is, therefore, impossible to reflect without awe upon the passage of Isaiah, written during the prosperity of Babylon, wherein he says, "The wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures, and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there." The present ruins of that city also demonstrate that the course of the Euphrates has been changed, probably in consequence of the channel formed by Cyrus; and the yielding nature of the soil demonstrates that such an operation could have been performed, by a large army, with great facility and dispatch.

The ruins examined by Mr. Rich bear testimony to the immense extent

of which has been pointed out by various writers, and which afford numerous eminent instances of the prescience of contingent and improbable events, whose evidence is so overwhelming that, as in the case of the illustrious prophecies of Daniel, unbelievers have been obliged to resort to the subterfuge of asserting, in opposition to the most direct proofs, the prophecies to have been written after the events, we shall close our instances by adverting to the prophecies respecting the Messiah,—the great end and object of the prophetic dispensation. Of these not a solitary instance or two, of an equivocal kind, and expressed only in figurative or symbolic language, are to be adduced ; but upwards of one hundred predictions, generally of very clear and explicit meaning, and each referring to some different circumstance connected with the appearing of Christ, his person, history, and his ministry, have been selected by Divines, exclusive of typical and allusive predictions,* and those which, in an ultimate and remote sense, are believed to terminate in him. How are all these to be disposed of, if the inspiration of the Scriptures which contain them be denied? That these predictions are in books written many ages before the birth of our Saviour, is certain ; the testimony of the Jews, who reject Christ, amply proves this. That no interpolations have taken place, to accommodate them to him, is proved by the same predictions being found in the copies which are in the hands of the Jews, and which have descended to them from before the Christian era. On the other hand, the history of Jesus answers to these predictions, and exhibits their exact accomplishment. The Messiah was to be of the seed of David, born in Bethlehem, born of a virgin, an incarnation of Deity, “ God with us,” an eminent but unsuccessful Teacher ; he was to open the eyes of the blind, heal the lame

of the city as described by ancient authors. Vast masses of masonry, of both burnt and unburnt brick and bitumen, were observed in various excavations in these huge mountains of ruins, which are separated from each other by several miles. One is called by the Arabs *Birs Nimrond* ; another the *Kasr*, or “ Palace ;” and a third, which some have thought to be the ruins of the tower of Belus, is called by the natives *Mugelibè*, “ overturned ;” which expressive term is also sometimes applied to the mounds of the *Kasr*.

* See note page 249.

and sick, and raise the dead ; he was to be despised and rejected by his own countrymen ; to be arraigned on false charges, denied justice, and condemned to a violent death ; he was to rise from the dead, ascend to the right hand of God, and there, being invested with power and authority, he was to punish his enemies, and establish his own spiritual kingdom, which shall never end. We do not enter into more minute predictions, for the argument is irresistible when founded on these alone ; and we may assert that no man, or number of men, could possibly have made such conjectures : Considered in themselves, that is impossible. What rational man, or number of rational men, could now be found to hazard a conjecture that an incarnation of Deity would occur in any given place and time ; that this divine Person should teach wisdom, work miracles, be unjustly put to death, rise again, and establish his religion ? These are thoughts which never enter into the minds of men, because they are suggested by no experience, and by no probability arising out of the usual course of human affairs ; and yet, if the Prophets were not inspired, it would have been as impossible for them to have conceived such expectations as for us ; and, indeed, much more so, seeing we are now familiar with a religion which asserts that such events have once occurred. If, then, such events lie beyond not only human foresight, but even human thought, they can only be referred to inspiration. But the case does not close here. How shall we account, in the next place, for these circumstances all having met, strange as they are, in one person, and in one only, among all the millions of men who have been born of woman ; and that person Jesus of Nazareth ? He was of the house and lineage of David ; he was born, and that by a singular event, in Bethlehem ; he professed to be “God with us,” and wrought miracles to substantiate his claim ; at his word or touch the eyes of the blind were opened, the lame leaped as a hart, the dumb spake, the sick were healed, and the dead lived, as the Prophets had foretold. Of the wisdom of his teaching his recorded discourses bear witness. His rejection and unjust death by his countrymen, are matters of historic fact ; his resurrection and ascension stand

upon the lofty evidences which have been already adduced. The destruction of the Jewish nation, according to his own predictions, followed as the proof of the terror of his offended majesty ; and his kingdom among men continues to this day. There is no possible means of evading the evidence of the fulfilment of these predictions in the person of our Lord, unless it could be shown that Jesus and his disciples, by some kind of concert, made the events of his life and death to correspond with the prophecies, in order to substantiate his claim to the Messiahship. No infidel has ever been so absurd as to hazard this opinion except Lord Bolingbroke ; and his observations may be taken as a most triumphant proof of the force of this evidence from prophecy, when an hypothesis so extravagant was resorted to by an acute mind, in order to evade it. This noble writer asserts that Jesus Christ brought on his own death by a series of wilful and preconcerted measures, merely to give his disciples the triumph of an appeal to the old prophecies. But this hypothesis does not reach the case ; and, to have succeeded, he ought to have shown that our Lord preconcerted his descent from David, his being born of a virgin, his birth at Bethlehem, and his wonderful endowments of eloquence and wisdom ; that, by some means or other, he wilfully made the Jews ungrateful to him, who healed their sick, and cleansed their lepers ; and that he not only contrived his own death, but his resurrection, and his ascension also, and the spread of his religion, in opposition to human opinion and human power, in order to give his disciples the triumph of an appeal to the prophecies. These subterfuges of infidels concede the point, and show that the truth cannot be denied but by doing the utmost violence to the understanding.

That wonderful series of particular prophecies respecting our Lord, contained in Isaiah liii., will illustrate the foregoing observations, and may properly close this chapter.

To this prophecy it cannot be objected, that its language is symbolic, or that in more than a few beautiful metaphors, easily understood, it is even figurative : Its style is that of narrative ; it is also entire in itself, and unmixed with any other subject ; and it evidently refers to one single person. So the ancient

Jews understood it, and applied it to Messiah; and though the modern Jews, in order to evade its force in the argument with Christians, allege that it describes the sufferings of their nation, and not of an individual, the objection is refuted by the terms of the prophecy itself. The Jewish people cannot be the sufferer, because he was to bear their griefs, to carry their sorrows, and to be wounded for their transgressions: "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows," &c. ; so that the person of the sufferer is clearly distinguished from the Jewish nation. Beside which, his death and burial are spoken of, and his sufferings are represented (verse 12) as voluntary; which in no sense can apply to the Jews. "Of himself, or of some other man," therefore, as the Ethiopian eunuch rightly conceived, the Prophet must have spoken. To some individual it must be applied; to none but to our Lord can it be applied; and, applied to him, the prophecy is converted into history itself. The Prophet declares, that his advent and works would be a revealing of the arm of the Lord; a singular display of divine power and goodness; and yet that a blind and incredulous people would not believe the report. Appearing in a low and humble condition, and not, as they expected their Messiah, in the pomp of eastern monarchy, his want of "comeliness" and "desirableness" in the eyes of his countrymen, and his rejection by them, are explicitly stated: "He was despised, and we esteemed him not." He is further described as "a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs;" yet his sufferings were considered by the Jews as judicial; a legal punishment, as they contend to this day, for his endeavouring to seduce men from the law, and for which they had the warrant of God himself, in his commands by Moses, that such seducers should be put to death. With what exactness are these sentiments of the Jews marked in the prophecy! We quote from the translation of Bishop Lowth:—

" Yet we thought him judicially stricken,
Smitten of God, and afflicted."

Christ himself and his Apostles uniformly represented his death as vicarious and propitiatory; and this is pre-

dicted and confirmed, so to speak, by the evidence of this prophecy.

“ But he was wounded for our transgressions,
Was smitten for our iniquities ;
The chastisement by which our peace is effected was laid upon him ;
And by his bruises we are healed.
We all of us like sheep have strayed :
We have turned aside, every one to his own way ;
And Jehovah hath made to light upon him the iniquity of us all.
It was exacted, and he was made answerable.”

Who can read the next passage without thinking of Jesus before the Council of the Jews, and the judgment-seat of Pilate ?

“ As a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before her shearers
Is dumb ; so he opened not his mouth.
By an oppressive judgment he was taken off.”

The very circumstances of his burial are given :—

“ And his grave was appointed with the wicked,
But with the rich man was his tomb.”

Yet though thus laid in the grave, the eye of the prophet beholds his resurrection, “ the joy set before him,” and into which he entered ; the distribution of spiritual blessings to his people, and his spiritual conquest of the nations of the earth, notwithstanding the opposition of “ the mighty ;” and he enumerates these particulars with a plainness so wonderful, that, by merely an alteration of the tenses of the verbs, the whole might be converted into an abridged view of what has occurred, and is now occurring, under the Christian dispensation, in the furtherance of human salvation :—

“ If his soul shall make a propitiatory sacrifice,
He shall see a seed, which shall prolong their days,
And the gracious purpose of Jehovah shall prosper in his hands.
Of the travail of his soul he shall see (the fruit) and be satisfied ;
By the knowledge of him shall my servant justify many ;
For the punishment of their iniquities he shall bear.

Wherefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion ;
 And the mighty people shall he share for his spoil ;
 Because he poured his soul out unto death ;
 And was numbered with the transgressors :
 And he bore the sin of many,
 And made intercession for the transgressors."

To all these predictions the words of a modern writer are applicable: "Let now the infidel, or the sceptical reader, meditate thoroughly and soberly upon these predictions. The priority of the records to the events admits of no question. The completion is obvious to every competent inquirer. Here then are facts. We are called upon to account for these facts on rational and adequate principles. Is human foresight equal to the task? Enthusiasm? Conjecture? Chance? Political contrivance? If none of these, neither can any other principle that may be devised by man's sagacity account for the facts: Then true philosophy, as well as true religion, will ascribe them to the inspiration of the Almighty. Every effect must have a cause."*

* Simpson's Key to the Prophecies. See also a large collection of prophecies, with their fulfilment, in the Appendix to vol. i. of Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Objections to the Evidence of Prophecy considered

BESIDES the objections which have been anticipated and answered in the last chapter, others have been made to the argument from prophecy, which, though exceedingly futile, ought to receive a cursory notice, lest any should think them of greater importance.

It has been objected, as to some of the prophecies, that they were written after the event; as, for instance, the prophecy of Isaiah in which the name of Cyrus is found, and the prophecies of Daniel. This allegation, standing as it does upon no evidence whatever, and being indeed in opposition to contrary proof, shows the hopelessness of the cause of infidelity, and affords a lofty triumph to the evidence of prophecy. For the objector does in fact acknowledge, that these predictions are not obscure; that the event exactly corresponded with them; and that they were beyond human conjecture. Without entering into those questions respecting the date of the books of Isaiah and Daniel, which properly belong to works on the canon of Scripture, we may observe, that the authors of this objection assert, but without giving the least proof, that Isaiah wrote his prophecies in order to flatter Cyrus, and that the book of Daniel was composed about the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes. It is therefore admitted that both were extant, and in their present form, before the time of the Christian era; but if so, what end, we ask, is answered by the objection? The Scriptures, as received by the Jews, were verified by the sentence of our Lord and his Apostles; and unless their inspiration can be disproved, the objection in question is a mere cavil. Before it can have any weight, the whole mass of evidence which supports the mission and divine authority of our Saviour and

the Apostles must be overthrown ; and not till then can it in strictness of reasoning be maintained. But, not to insist on this, the assertion respecting Isaiah is opposed to positive testimony ; the testimony of the Prophet himself, who states that he lived “ in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah ;” and the testimony of an independent witness, the author of the Second Book of Kings, in the twentieth chapter of which book Isaiah is brought forward in connexion with a public event of the Jewish history,—the dangerous sickness and recovery of the King Hezekiah. The proof is then as decisive as the public records of a kingdom can make it, that Isaiah wrote more than a hundred years before the birth of Cyrus.*

The time when Daniel lived and wrote is bound up in like manner with public history,—and that not only of the Jews, but of the Babylonians and Persians ; and could not be antedated so as to impose upon the Jews, who received into their canon the book which bears his name, as the production of the same Daniel who had filled exalted stations in the courts of Nebuchadnezzar and his successors. In favour of a later date being assigned to the Book of Daniel, it has been said that it has many Greek terms, and that it was not translated by the LXX., the translation now inserted in the Septuagint being by Theodotion. With respect to the Greek terms, they are chiefly found in the names of the musical instruments ; and the Greeks acknowledge, that they derived their music from the eastern nations. With respect to the second

* “ But if you will persevere in believing that the prophecy concerning Cyrus was written after the event, peruse the burden of Babylon : Was that also written after the event ? Were the Medes then stirred up against Babylon ? Was Babylon, the glory of the kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees, then overthrown, and become as Sodom and Gomorrah ? Was it then uninhabited ? Was it then neither fit for the Arabian’s tent nor the shepherd’s fold ? Did the wild beasts of the desert then lie there ? Did the wild beasts of the islands then cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant places ? Were Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, the son and the grandson, then cut off ? Was Babylon then become a possession of the bittern, and pools of water ? Was it then swept with the besom of destruction, so swept that the world knows not now where to find it ?”—BISHOP WATSON’S *Apology*.

objection, it is unfounded. The authors of the Septuagint did translate the Book of Daniel, and their version is cited by Clemens Romanus, Justin Martyr, and many of the ancient Fathers; it occupied a column of the Hexapla of Origen, and is quoted by Jerome. The present Greek version by Theodotion, inserted in the Septuagint, was made in the second century, and preferred as being more conformable to the original. The repudiated version was published some years ago from an ancient MS. discovered at Rome.*

The opponents of Scripture are fond of the attempt to lower the dignity and authority of the sacred prophecies by comparing them to the heathen oracles. The absolute contrast between them has already been pointed out;† but a few additional observations may not be useless.

Of the innumerable oracles which were established and consulted by the ancient Heathen, the most celebrated was the Delphic; and we may, therefore, for the purpose of exhibiting the contrast more perfectly between the Pythian oracle and the prophecies of Scripture, confine our remarks to that.

The first great distinction lies in this, that none of the predictions ever uttered by the Delphic oracle went deep into futurity. They relate to events on the eve of taking place, and whose preparatory circumstances were known. There was not even the pretence of foresight to the distance of a few years; though had it been a hundred years, even that were a very limited period to the eye of inspired Prophets, who looked through the course of succeeding ages, and gave proof, by the very sweep and compass of their predictions, that they were under the inspirations of Him to whom

* Porphyry, in his books against the Christian religion, was the first to attack the prophecies of Daniel; and in modern times, Collins, in his *Scheme of Literal Prophecy*, bent all his force against a book so pregnant with proofs of the truth of Christianity, and the inspiration of ancient prophecy. By two learned opponents his eleven objections were most satisfactorily refuted, and shown to be mere cavils;—by Bishop Chandler, in his *Vindication of his Defence of Christianity*; and by Dr. Samuel Chandler, in his *Vindication of Daniel's Prophecies*.

† Vide chapter xvi.

“a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

A second contrast lies in the ambiguity of the responses. The prophecies of Scripture are sometimes obscure, though this does not apply to the most eminent of those which have been most signally fulfilled, as we have already seen; but they never equivocate. For this the Pythian oracle was notorious. Historians relate, that Cræsus, who had expended large sums upon the agents of this delusion, was tricked by an equivocation; through which, interpreting the response most favourably for himself, he was induced to make an unsuccessful war on Cyrus. In his subsequent captivity he repeatedly reproached the oracle, and charged it with falsehood. The response delivered to Pyrrhus was of the same kind; and was so expressed as to be true, whether Pyrrhus conquered the Romans or the Romans Pyrrhus. Many other instances of the same kind are given; not to mention the trifling, and even bantering and jocose oracles, which were sometimes pronounced.*

The venality, wealth, and servility of the Delphic oracle, present another contrast to the poverty and disinterestedness of the Jewish Prophets, whom no gifts could bribe, and no power awe in the discharge of their duty. Demosthenes, in one of his speeches to the Athenians, publicly charges this oracle with being “gained over to the interests of King Philip;” and the Greek historians give other instances in which it had been corrupted by money, and the prophetess sometimes deposed for bribery, sometimes for lewdness.

* Eusebius has preserved some fragments of a philosopher, called Cœno-
maus; who, out of resentment for his having been so often fooled by the
oracles, wrote an ample confutation of all their impertinences: “When
we come to consult thee,” says he to Apollo, “if thou seest what is in futurity,
why dost thou use expressions that will not be understood? If thou dost,
thou takest pleasure in abusing us; if thou dost not, be informed of us, and
learn to speak more clearly. I tell thee, that if thou intendedst an equivocate,
the Greek word whereby thou affirmedst that Cræsus should overthrow a
great empire was ill chosen; and that it could signify nothing but Cræsus’s
conquering Cyrus. If things must necessarily come to pass, why dost thou
amuse us with thy ambiguities? What dost thou, wretch as thou art at
Delphi, employed in muttering of idle prophecies?”

Neither threats nor persecutions had any influence with the Jewish Prophets; but it would seem that this celebrated oracle of Apollo was not even proof against raillery. At first it gave its answers in verse; but the Epicureans, Cynics, and others, laughing so much at the poorness of the versification, it fell at length into prose. "It was surprising," said these philosophic wits, "that Apollo, the god of poetry, should be a much worse poet than Homer, whom he himself had inspired." Plutarch considers this as a principal cause of the declension of the oracle of Delphos. Doubtless it had declined much in credit, in his day; and the further spread of Christianity completed its ruin.

Can then the prophecies of Scripture be paralleled with these dark, and venal, and delusive oracles without impiety? and could any higher honour be wished for the Jewish Prophets, than the comparison into which they are thus brought with the agents of Paganism at Delphos and other places? They had recourse to no smooth speeches, no compliances with the tempers and prejudices of men. They concealed no truth which they were commissioned to declare, however displeasing to their nation, and hazardous to themselves. They required no caves, or secret places of temples, from which to utter their messages; and those who consulted them were not practised upon by the bewildering ceremonies imposed upon inquirers at Delphos. They prophesied in streets, and courts, and palaces, and in the midst of large assemblies. Their predictions had a clear, determinate, and consistent sense; and they described future events with so many particularities of time and place, as made it scarcely possible that they should be misunderstood or misapplied.

Pure and elevated as was the character of the Jewish Prophets, the hardihood of infidelity has attempted to cast aspersions upon them; because it appears from Scripture story, that there were false prophets and bad men who bore that name.

Balaam is instanced, though not a Jewish Prophet; but that he was always a bad man, wants proof. The probability is, that his virtue was overcome by the offers of Balak; and

the prophetic Spirit was not taken away from him, because there was an evident design on the part of God to make his favour to Israel more conspicuous, by obliging a reluctant prophet to bless, when he would have cursed, and that in the very presence of a hostile King. When that work was done, Balaam was consigned to his proper punishment.

With respect to the Jewish false prophets, it is a singular proceeding to condemn the true ones for their sake, and to argue that because bad men assumed their functions, and imitated their manner, for corrupt purposes, the universally-received Prophets of the nation—men who, from the proofs they gave of their inspiration, had their commission acknowledged even by those who hated them, and their writings received into the Jewish canon—were bad men also. Let the characters of Moses, Samuel, Elijah, Elisha, Nathan, Isaiah, Jeremiah,* Daniel, and the authors of the other prophetic books, be considered; and how true are the words of the Apostle, that they were “holy men of old,” as well as that they were “moved by the Holy Ghost!” That the prophets who prophesied “smooth things” were never considered as true Prophets, except for a time by a few who wished to have their hopes flattered, is plain from this,—none of their writings were preserved by the Jews. Their predictions would not abound in reproofs and threatenings, like those of Isaiah and Jeremiah; and yet the words of those Prophets who were personally most displeasing to the Jews of the age in which they lived, have been preserved, whilst every flattering prophecy was suffered to fall into oblivion almost as soon as it was uttered. Can we have a more decisive proof than this, that the false prophets were a perfectly distinct class of men,—the venal imitators of these “holy men of old;” and that they never gave, even to those most disposed to listen to their delusive prophecies, a satisfactory proof of their prophetic commission?

* A weak attempt has been made by some infidel writers to fasten a charge of falsehood on Jeremiah, in the case of his confidential interview with King Zedekiah. A satisfactory refutation is given by Bishop Watson in his Answer to Paine, Letter vi.

Attempts have been made to show, that a few of the prophecies of Scripture have failed. The following are the principal instances :—

It has been said, that a false promise was made to Abraham, when it was promised to him, that his descendants should possess the territory which lies between the Euphrates and the river of Egypt. But this objection is clearly made in ignorance of the Scriptures; for the fact is, that David conquered that territory, and that the dominions of Solomon were thus extended.*

Voltaire objects, that the Prophets made promises to the Jews of the most unbounded riches, dominion, and influence, insomuch that they could only have been accomplished by their conquering or proselyting the entire of the habitable globe. On the contrary, he says, they have lost their possessions instead of obtaining either property or power, and therefore the prophecies are false.

The case is here unfairly stated. The Prophets never made such exaggerated promises. They predict many spiritual blessings to be bestowed in the times of Messiah, under figures drawn from worldly opulence and power, the figurative language of which no attentive reader can mistake. They also promise many civil advantages, but only conditionally on the obedience of the nation; and they speak in high terms of the state of the Jewish nation, upon its final restoration, for which objectors must wait before they can determine the predictions to be false. But did not Voltaire know, that the loss of their own country by the Jews, of which he speaks, was predicted in the clearest manner? and would he not have seen, had he not been blinded by his prejudices, that his very objection acknowledges the truth of prophecy? The promises of the Prophets have not been falsified in the instance given, but their threats have been signally fulfilled.

Paine, following preceding writers of the same sentiments, asserts the prophecy of Isaiah to Ahaz not to have been verified by the event, and is thus answered by Bishop Watson :†

* Vide 2 Sam. viii.; 1 Chron. xviii.

† Apology, Letter v.

“The prophecy is quoted by you, to prove, (and it is the only instance you produce,) that Isaiah was ‘a lying Prophet, and impostor.’ Now, I maintain, that this very instance proves that he was a true Prophet and no impostor. The history of the prophecy, as delivered in the seventh chapter, is this: Rezin, King of Syria, and Pekah, King of Israel, made war upon Ahaz, King of Judah; not merely, or perhaps, not at all, for the sake of plunder, or the conquest of territory, but with a declared purpose of making an entire revolution in the government of Judah, of destroying the royal house of David, and of placing another family on the throne. Their purpose is thus expressed:—‘Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a King in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal.’ Now, what did the Lord commission Isaiah to say to Ahaz? Did he commission him to say, ‘The Kings shall not vex thee?’ No. ‘The Kings shall not conquer thee?’ No. ‘The Kings shall not succeed against thee?’ No: He commissioned him to say, ‘It,’ the purpose of the two Kings, ‘shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.’ I demand, Did it stand, did it come to pass? Was any revolution effected? Was the royal house of David dethroned and destroyed? Was Tabeal ever made King of Judah? No. The prophecy was perfectly accomplished. You say, ‘Instead of these two Kings failing in their attempt against Ahaz, they succeeded: Ahaz was defeated and destroyed.’ I deny the fact: Ahaz was defeated, but not destroyed. And even the ‘two hundred thousand women, and sons and daughters,’ whom you represent as carried into captivity, were not carried into captivity; they were made captives, but they were not carried into captivity; for the chief men of Samaria, being admonished by a Prophet, would not suffer Pekah to bring the captives into the land: ‘They rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses,’ (some humanity, you see, amongst those Israelites, whom you every where represent as barbarous brutes,) ‘and brought them to Jericho, the city

of palm-trees, to their brethren.' (2 Chron. xxviii. 15.) The Kings did fail in their attempt: Their attempt was to destroy the house of David, and to make a revolution; but they made no revolution, they did not destroy the house of David; for Ahaz slept with his fathers, and Hezekiah, his son, of the house of David, reigned in his stead."

A similar attempt is made by the same writer to fix a charge of false vaticination upon Jeremiah, and is thus answered by the Bishop of Llandaff:—" ' In the thirty-fourth chapter is a prophecy of Jeremiah to Zedekiah, in these words: (verse 2:) *Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hands of the King of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but thou shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the King of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, King of Judah: Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not die by the sword, but thou shalt die in peace; and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former Kings that were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee, and will lament thee, saying, Ah Lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord.* Now, instead of Zedekiah beholding the eyes of the King of Babylon, and speaking with him mouth to mouth, and dying in peace, and with the burnings of odours at the funeral of his fathers, (as Jeremiah hath declared the Lord himself had pronounced,) the reverse, according to the fifty-second chapter, was the case: It is there stated, (verse 10,) that *the King of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.* What can we say of these Prophets, but that they are impostors and liars?'—I can say this, that the prophecy you have produced was fulfilled in all its parts; and what then shall be said of those who call Jeremiah a liar and an impostor? Here, then, we are fairly at issue: You affirm that the prophecy was not fulfilled, and I affirm that it was fulfilled in all

its parts. 'I will give this city into the hands of the King of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.' So says the Prophet. What says the history? 'They,' the forces of the King of Babylon, 'burnt the house of God, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire.' (2 Chron. xxxvi. 19.) 'Thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but thou shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand.' So says the Prophet. What says the history? 'The men of war fled by night, and the King went the way towards the plain, and the army of the Chaldees pursued after the King, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army were scattered from him: So they took the King, and brought him up to the King of Babylon, to Riblah.' (2 Kings xxv. 5.) The Prophet goes on: 'Thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the King of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth.' No pleasant circumstance this to Zedekiah, who had provoked the King of Babylon by revolting from him. The history says, 'The King of Babylon gave judgment upon Zedekiah,' or, as it is more literally rendered from the Hebrew, 'spake judgments with him at Riblah.' The Prophet concludes this part with, 'And thou shalt go to Babylon:' the history says, 'The King of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.' (Jer. lii. 11.) 'Thou shalt not die by the sword.' He did not die by the sword; he did not fall in battle. 'But thou shalt die in peace.' He did die in peace; he neither expired on the rack, nor on the scaffold; was neither strangled nor poisoned, no unusual fate of captive Kings; he died peaceably in his bed, though that bed was in a prison. 'And with the burnings of thy fathers shall they burn odours before thee.' I cannot prove from the history, that this part of the prophecy was accomplished, nor can you prove that it was not. The probability is that it was accomplished; and I have two reasons on which I ground this probability:—Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to say nothing of other Jews, were men of great authority in the court of the King of Babylon, before and after the commencement of the imprisonment of Zedekiah; and Daniel continued

in power till the subversion of the kingdom of Babylon by Cyrus. Now it seems to me to be very probable, that Daniel and the other great men of the Jews would have both inclination to request, and influence enough with the King of Babylon to obtain, permission to bury their deceased Prince, Zedekiah, after the manner of his fathers. But if there had been no Jews at Babylon of consequence enough to make such a request, still it is probable that the King of Babylon would have ordered the Jews to bury and lament their departed Prince, after the manner of their country. Monarchs, like other men, are conscious of the instability of human condition ; and when the pomp of war has ceased, when the insolence of conquest is abated, and the fury of resentment is subsided, they seldom fail to revere royalty, even in its ruins, and grant, without reluctance, proper obsequies to the remains of captive Kings."

Ezekiel is assaulted in the same manner. "You quote," says the same writer, "a passage from Ezekiel, in the 29th chapter, where, speaking of Egypt, it is said, 'No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years ;' this, you say, 'never came to pass, and, consequently, it is false, as all the books I have already reviewed are.' Now, that the invasion predicted did come to pass, we have, as Bishop Newton observes, 'the testimonies of Megasthenes and Berosus, two heathen historians, who lived about three hundred years before Christ ; one of whom affirms, expressly, that Nebuchadnezzar conquered the greater part of Africa ; and the other affirms it, in effect, in saying that when Nebuchadnezzar heard of the death of his father, having settled his affairs in Egypt, and committed the captives whom he took in Egypt to the care of some of his friends, to bring them after him, he hasted directly to Babylon.' And if we had been possessed of no testimony in support of the prophecy, it would have been an hasty conclusion that the prophecy never came to pass ; the history of Egypt, at so remote a period, being nowhere accurately and circumstantially related. I admit that no period can be pointed out, from the age of Ezekiel to the present, in

which there was no foot of man or beast to be seen for forty years in all Egypt ; but some think that only a part of Egypt is here spoken of ;* and surely you do not expect a literal accomplishment of an hyperbolical expression denoting great desolation, importing that the trade of Egypt, which was carried on then, as at present, by caravans, by the foot of man and beast, should be annihilated."

To this we may add, that the passage respecting the depopulation of Egypt stands in the midst of an extended prophecy which has received the most marked fulfilment ; and illustrates, perhaps as strikingly as any thing which can be adduced, the cavilling spirit of infidelity, and proves that truth could never be the object of discussions thus conducted. Here is a passage which has some obscurity hanging over it : No one, however, can prove that it was not accomplished, even so fully that the expressions might be used without violent hyperbole ; for the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar was one of the same sweeping and devastating character as his invasion and conquest of Judea ; and we know that the greater part of the inhabitants of that country were destroyed, or led captive, and that the land generally remained untilld for seventy years, though not absolutely left without inhabitant. In the common language of men, Judea might be said not to be inhabited, so prodigious was the excision of its people ; and in such circumstances, from the total cessation of all former intercourse, commercial and otherwise, between the different parts of the kingdom, it might also, without exaggeration, be said, that the foot of man and beast did not "pass through it ;" their going from one part to another on business, or for worship at Jerusalem, being wholly suspended. Now, as we have no reason to suppose the Babylonian Monarch to have

* The opinion of the Bishop, that not the whole of what is now called Egypt was intended in the prophecy, seems to derive confirmation from the following passages in Richardson's *Travels in Egypt*, in 1817 : "The Delta, according to the tradition of the Jonians, is the only part that is, strictly speaking, entitled to be called Egypt ; which is hieroglyphically represented by the figure of a heart, no unapt similitude." "The principal places mentioned in our sacred writings, Zoan, Noph, and Tophanes, are all referable to the Delta. Probably little of them remains."

been more merciful to Egypt than to Judea, the same expressions, in a popular sense, might be used in respect of that country. Here, however, infidelity thought a cavil might be raised, and totally (may we not say wilfully?) overlooked a prediction immediately following, which no human sagacity could conjecture, and against which it is in vain to urge that it was written after the event; for the accomplishment of the prophecy runs on to the present day, and is as palpable and obvious as the past history, and the present political state, of that country: "Egypt shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations; there shall be no more a Prince of the land of Egypt."* It is more than two thousand years since the prophecy was delivered; and Egypt has never recovered its liberties, but is, to this day, under the yoke of foreigners. It was conquered by the Babylonians, then by the Persians, and, in succession, passed under the dominion of the Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, Mamelucs, and Turks. No native Prince of Egypt has ever restored his country to independence, and ascended the throne of his ancestors; and the descendants of the ancient Egyptians are, to this hour, in the basest and most oppressed condition. Yet in Egypt the human mind had made some of its earliest and most auspicious efforts. The stupendous monuments of art and power, the ruins of which lie piled upon the banks of the Nile, or still defy the wastes of time, attest the vastness of the designs, and the extent of the power, of its Princes. Egypt, too, was possessed of great natural advantages: Its situation was singularly calculated to protect it against foreign invasion; whilst its great fertility promised to secure the country it enriched from poverty, baseness, and subjection. Yet, after a long course of grandeur, and in contradiction to its natural advantages, Ezekiel pronounced that the kingdom should be "the basest of all kingdoms," and that there should be "no more a Prince of the land of Egypt." So the event has been, and so it remains; and that this wonderful prophecy should be passed over by infidels in silence,

* Vide Ezekiel xxix. and xxx.

whilst they select from it a passage which promised to give some colour to objection, is deeply characteristic of the state of their minds. It is not from deficiency of evidence that the word of God is rejected by them ; the evil is not the want of light, but the love of darkness.

Much ridicule has been cast upon the Prophets for those significant actions by which they illustrated their predictions ; as when Jeremiah hides his linen girdle in a hole of the rock, and breaks a potter's vessel in the sight of the people ; when Ezekiel weighs the hair of his head and beard in balances ; with many other instances familiar to those who read the Scriptures. But this ridicule can only proceed from ignorance. In the early ages of the world the deficiency of language was often supplied by signs ; and when language was improved, "the practice remained," says Bishop Warburton, "after the necessity was over ; especially among the Easterns, whose natural temperament inclined them to this mode of conversation. The charges, then, of absurdity and fanaticism brought against the Prophets, vanish of themselves. The absurdity of an action consists in its being extravagant and insigantive ; but use, and a fixed application, made the actions in question both sober and pertinent. The fanaticism of an action consists in fondness for such actions as are unusual, and for foreign modes of speech ; but those of the Prophets were idiomatic and familiar." We may add, that several of these actions were performed in vision ; and that, considering the genius of the people who were addressed, they were calculated strongly to excite their attention,—the end for which they were adopted.

Such are the principal objections which have been made to scripture prophecy, as the proof of scripture truth. That they are so few and so feeble, when enemies so prying and capable have employed themselves with so much misplaced zeal to discover any vulnerable part, is the triumph of truth. Their futility has been pointed out ; and the whole weight of the preceding evidence in favour of the truth of the Old and New Testaments remains unmoved. We have, indeed, but glanced at a few of these extraordinary revelations of the future, for

the sake, not of exhibiting the evidence of prophecy,—which would require a distinct volume,—but of explaining its nature, and pointing out its force. To the prophecies of the Old Testament, the attentive inquirer will add those of our Lord and his Apostles ; which will appear not less extraordinary in themselves, nor less illustrious in their fulfilment, so far as they have received their accomplishment. Many prophecies, both of the Old and New Testament, evidently point to future times ; and this kind of evidence will consequently accumulate with the lapse of ages, and may be among the means by which Jews, Mahometans, and Pagans shall be turned to the Christian faith. At all events, prophecy, even unfulfilled, now answers an important end : It opens our prospect into the future ; and if the detail is obscure, yet, notwithstanding the mighty contest which is still going on between opposing powers and principles, we see how the struggle will terminate, and know, to use a prophetic phrase, that “at eventime it shall be light.”

CHAPTER XIX.

Internal Evidence of the Truth of Scripture—Collateral Evidence.

THE internal evidence of a revelation from God has been stated to be that which arises from the apparent excellence and beneficial tendency of the doctrine.* This at least is its chief characteristic, though other particulars may also be included in this species of proof, and shall be adduced

The reader will recollect the distinction made in the chapter just referred to, between rational and authenticating evidence. It has been observed, that there are some truths made known to us through the medium of a revelation from God, which, though in their nature undiscoverable by the unassisted faculties of man, yet, when once revealed, carry to our reason, so far as they are of a nature to be comprehended by it, the demonstration which accompanies truth of any other kind.† But it is only within the limit just mentioned that this position holds good ; for such truths only must be understood as are accompanied with reasons or rational proofs in the revelation itself, or which, when once suggested to the mind, direct its thoughts and observation to surrounding facts and circumstances, or to established truths to which they are capable of being compared, and by which they are confirmed. The internal evidence of the holy Scriptures, therefore, as far as doctrine is concerned, is restrained to truths of this class. Of other truths revealed to us in the Bible, and those in many instances fundamental to the system of Christianity, we have no proof of this kind ; but they stand on the firm basis of divine attestation, and suffer no diminution of their authority because the reasons of them are either hidden from us for purposes of moral discipline, or because they transcend our

* Vide chap. ix.

† Ibid.

faculties. If we had the reasons of them before us, they would not be more authentic, though to the understanding they would be more obvious. Such are the doctrines of a trinity of persons in the unity of the Godhead ; of the hypostatic union of the two natures in Christ ; of his divine and eternal Sonship, &c. Such are many facts in the divine government, —as the permission of evil, and the long apparent abandonment of heathen nations ; the unequal religious advantages afforded to individuals as well as nations ; and many of the circumstances of our individual moral trial upon earth. Of the truth of these doctrines, and the fitness of these and many other facts, we have no internal evidence whatever ; but a very large class of truths which are found in the revelations of Scripture, afford more or less of this kind of proof, and make their appeal to our reason as well as to our faith ; in other words, their reasonableness is such that, though the great demonstration does not rest upon that, it affords an additional argument why they should be thankfully received and heartily credited.

The first and fundamental doctrine of Scripture is, the existence of God ;—the great and the sole First Cause of all things, eternal, self-existent, present in all places, knowing all things, infinite in power and wisdom ; and perfect in goodness, justice, holiness, and truth. That this view of the divine Being, for which we are indebted to the Scriptures alone, presents itself with powerful rational demonstration to the mind of man, is illustriously shown by that astonishing change of opinion on this great subject which took place in pagan nations upon the promulgation of Christianity, and which in Europe continues to this day substantially unaltered. Not only those gross notions which prevailed among the vulgar, but the dark, uncertain, and contradictory researches of the philosophers of different schools, have passed away ; and the truth respecting God, stated in the majesty and simplicity of the Scriptures, has been, with few exceptions, universally received, and that among enlightened Deists themselves. These discoveries of revelation have satisfied the human mind on this great and primary doctrine ; and have given it a

resting-place which it never before found, and from which if it ever departs, it finds no demonstration until it returns to the "marvellous light" into which revealed religion has introduced us. A class of ideas, the most elevated and sublime, and which the most profound minds in former times sought without success, have thus become familiar to the very peasants in Christian nations. Nothing can be a more striking proof of the appeal which the Scripture character of God makes to the unsophisticated reason of mankind.*

Of the state and condition of man as it is represented in our holy writings, the evidence from fact, and from the consciousness of our own bosoms, is very copious. What man is, in his relations to God, his Maker and Governor, we had never discovered without revelation; but, now this is made known, confirmatory fact crowds in on every side, and affords its evidence of the truth of the doctrine.

The Old and New Testaments agree in representing the human race as not very vicious, and capable, without moral check and control, of the greatest enormities; so that not only individual happiness, but social also, is constantly obstructed or endangered. To this the history of all ages bears witness, and present experience gives its testimony. All the states of antiquity crumbled down, or were suddenly overwhelmed, by their own vices; and the general character and conduct of the people which composed them may be read in the works of their historians, poets, and satirists, which have been trans-

* The Scripture character of the divine Being is thus strikingly drawn out by Dr. A. Clarke, in his note on Gen. i. 1:—

"The eternal, independent, and self-existent Being. The Being whose purposes and actions spring from himself, without foreign motive or influence: He who is absolute in dominion; the most pure, most simple, and most spiritual of all essences; infinitely benevolent, beneficent, true and holy; the cause of all being, the upholder of all things; infinitely happy, because infinitely good; and eternally self-sufficient, needing nothing that he has made. Illimitable in his immensity, inconceivable in his mode of existence, and indescribable in his essence; known fully only to himself, because an infinite mind can only be comprehended by itself. In a word, a Being who, from his infinite wisdom, cannot err or be deceived; and who, from his infinite goodness, can do nothing but what is eternally just, right, and kind."

mitted to our times. These, as to the Greeks and Romans, fully bear out the darkest colouring of their moral condition to be found in the well-known first chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the church at Rome, and other passages in his various Epistles. To this day, the same representation depicts the condition of almost all pagan countries, and, in many respects, too, some parts of Christendom, where the word of God has been hidden from the people, and its moral influence, consequently, has not been suffered to develope itself. In those countries also where that corrective has been most carefully applied, though exalted beyond comparison in just, honourable, benevolent, and sober principles and habits, along with the frequent occurrence of numerous and gross actual crimes, the same appetites and passions may be seen in constant contest with the laws of the state; with the example of the virtuous; and with the controlling influence of the word of God, preached by faithful Ministers, taught as a part of the process of education, and spread through society by the multiplication of its copies since the invention of printing. The holy Scriptures, therefore, characterize man only as he is actually found in all ages, and in all places to the utmost bounds of those geographical discoveries which have been made through the adventurous spirit of modern navigators.

But they not only assume men to be actually vicious, but vicious in consequence of a moral taint in their nature; originally and inevitably so, were it not for those provisions of grace and means of sanctity of which they speak: And as this assumption is the basis of the whole scheme of moral restoration, through the once promised Seed of the woman, and the now actually given Jesus, the Saviour, so they constantly remind him that he is "born in sin and shapen in iniquity," and that, being born of the flesh, he cannot please God. What is thus represented as doctrine, appeals to our reason through the evidence of unquestionable fact. The strong tendency of man to crime, cannot be denied. Civil penal laws are enacted for no other purpose than to repress it; they are multiplied in the most civilized states to shut out the evil in

all those new directions towards which the multiplied relations of man, and his increased power, arising from increased intelligence, have given it its impulse. Every legal deed, with its seals and witnesses, bears testimony to that opinion as to human nature which the experience of man has impressed on man; and history itself is a record chiefly of human guilt, because examples of crime have every where and at all times been much more frequent than examples of virtue. This tendency to evil, the Scriptures tell us, arises from "the heart," the nature and disposition of man; and it is not otherwise to be accounted for. Some, indeed, have represented the corruption of the race as the result of association and example; but if men were naturally inclined to good, and averse to evil, how is it that not a few individuals only, but the whole race, have become evil by mutual association? This would be to make the weaker cause the more efficient, which is manifestly absurd. It is contrary, too, to the reason of the case, that the example and association of persons naturally well-disposed should produce any other effect than that of confirming and maturing their good dispositions; as it is the effect of example and association, among persons of similar tastes and of similar pursuits, to confirm and improve the habit which gives rise to them. As little plausibility is there in the opinion which would account for this general corruption from bad education. How, if man in all ages had been rightly affected in his moral inclinations, did a course of deleterious education commence? How, if commenced, came it, that what must have been so abhorrent to a virtuously-disposed community, was not arrested, and a better system of instruction introduced? But the fact itself may be denied; for the worst education inculcates a virtue above the general practice; and no course of education was ever adopted purposely to encourage immorality. In the Scriptures alone we find a cause assigned which accounts for the phenomenon; and we are bound therefore by the rules of philosophy itself to admit it. It is this, that man is by nature prone to evil; and as it would be highly unreasonable to suppose, that this disposition was implanted in him by his benevolent and holy Maker, we are equally bound in reason

to admit the Scripture solution of the fall of the human race from a higher and better state.

A third view of the condition of man contained in the Scriptures, is, that he is not only under the divine authority, but that the government of Heaven, as to him, is of a mixed character ; that he is treated with severity, and with kindness also ; that, considered both as corrupt in his nature and tendencies, and as in innumerable instances actually offending, he is placed under a rigidly restraining discipline, to meet his case in the first respect, and under correction and penal dispensation with relation to the latter. On the other hand, as he is an object beloved by the God he has offended, a being for whose pardon and recovery divine mercy has made provision, moral ends are connected with these severities ; and nature and providence, as well as revelation, are crowned with instances of divine benevolence to the sinning race. The proof of these different relations of man to God surrounds us in that admixture of good and evil, of indulgence and restraint, of felicity and misery, to which he is so manifestly subject. Life is felt, in all ordinary circumstances, to be a blessing ; but it is short and uncertain, liable to diseases and accidents. Many enjoyments fall to the lot of men ; yet with the majority they are attained by means of great and exhausting labours of the body or of the mind, through which the risks to health and life are greatly multiplied ; or they are accompanied with so many disappointments, fears, and cares, that their number and their quality are greatly lessened. The globe itself, the residence of man, and upon whose fertility, seasons, exterior surface, and interior stratification, so much of the external felicity of man depends, bears marks of a mingled kind of just and merciful government, suited to such a being as man in the state described in the Scriptures, and to none else. It cannot be supposed, that if inhabited by a race of beings perfectly holy and in the full enjoyment of the divine favour, this earth would be exposed to destructive earthquakes, volcanoes, and inundations ; to blights and dearths, the harbingers of famine ; to those changes in the atmosphere which induce wide-wasting epidemic disorders ; to that general sterility of soil which

renders labour necessary to such a degree, as fully to occupy the time of the majority of mankind, prevent them from engaging in pursuits worthy an intellectual nature, and wear down their spirits ; nor that the metals so necessary for man in civilized life, and, in many countries, the material of the fire by which cold must be repelled, food prepared, and the most important arts executed, would be hidden deep in the bowels of the earth, so that a great body of men must be doomed to the dangerous and humbling labour of raising them. These and many other instances* show a course of discipline very incongruous with the most enlightened views of the divine character, if man be considered as an innocent being. On the contrary, that he is under an unmixed penal administration, is contradicted by the facts, that the earth yet yields her increase ordinarily to industry ; that the destructive convulsions of nature are but occasional ; and that, generally, the health of the human race predominates over sickness, and their animal enjoyments over positive misery. To those diverse relations of man to God, as stated in the Bible, the contrarieties of nature and providence bear an exact adaptation. Assume man to be any thing else than what he is represented in Scripture, they would be discordant and inexplicable ; in this view they harmonize. Man is neither innocent, nor finally condemned ; he is fallen and guilty, but not excluded from the compassion and care and benignity of his God.

The next leading doctrine of Christianity is the restoration of man to the divine favour, through the merits of the vicarious and sacrificial death of Christ, the incarnate Son of God. To this many objections have been offered ; but, on the other hand, many important reasons for such a procedure have been overlooked. The rational evidence of this doctrine, we grant, is partial and limited ; but it will be recollected to have been already proved, that the authority and truth of a doctrine are not thereby affected. It is, indeed, not unreasonable to suppose, that the evidence of the fitness and neces-

* See the argument largely and ingeniously exhibited in *Gisborne's Testimony of Natural Theology*, &c.

sity of such a doctrine should be to us obscure. “The reason of the thing,” says Bishop Butler, “and the whole analogy of nature, should teach us not to expect to have the like information concerning the divine conduct, as concerning our own duty.” On whatever terms God had been pleased to offer forgiveness to his creatures, if any other had been morally possible, it is not to be supposed that all the reasons of his conduct—which must of course respect the very principles of his government in general, extending not only to man, but to other beings—could have been explained; and certain it is, that those to whom the benefit was offered would have had no right to require it.

The Christian doctrine of atonement, as a necessary merciful interposition, is grounded upon the liability of man to punishment in another life, for sins committed against the law of God in this; and against this view of the future prospects of mankind there can lie no objection of weight. Men are capable of committing sin, and sin is productive of misery and disorder. These positions cannot be denied. That to violate the laws of God, and to despise his authority, are not light crimes, is clear from considering them in their general effect upon society, and upon the world. Remove from the human race all the effects produced by vice, direct and indirect; all the inward and outward miseries and calamities which are entirely evitable by mankind, and which they wilfully bring upon themselves and others; and scarcely a sigh would be heaved, or a groan heard, except those extorted by natural evils, (small comparatively in number,) throughout the whole earth. The great sum of human misery is the effect of actual offence; and as it is a principle in the wisest and most perfect human legislation to estimate the guilt of individual acts by their general tendency, and to proportion the punishment to them under that consideration, the same reason of the case is in favour of this principle, as found in Scripture; and thus considered, the demerit of the sins of an individual against God becomes incalculable. Nor is there any foundation to suppose, that the punishment assigned to sin by the judicial appointment of the supreme Governor is confined to the pre-

sent life ; for before we can determine that, we must be able to estimate the demerit of an act of wilful transgression in its principle, habits, and influence, which, as parties implicated, we are not in a state of feeling or judgment to attempt, were the subject more within our grasp. But the obvious reason of the case is in favour of the doctrine of future punishment ; for not only is there an unequal administration of punishments in the present life, so that many eminent offenders pass through the present state without any visible manifestation of the divine displeasure against their conduct, but there are also strong and convincing proofs that we are placed in a state of trial, which continues throughout life, and the result of which can only be known, and consequently we ourselves can only become subjects of final reward or punishment, after existence in this world terminates. From the circumstances we have just enumerated to indicate the kind of government which is exercised over the human race, we must conclude, that, allowing the supreme Governor to be wise and just, benevolent and holy, men are neither treated as innocent nor as incorrigibly corrupt. Now, what reason can possibly be given for this mixed kind of administration, but that the moral improvement of man is the object intended by it ? The severity discourages and restrains vice ; the annexation of inward felicity in all cases, (and outward in all those instances in which the result depends upon the conduct of the individual,) to holy habits and acts, recommends and sanctions them, and allures to the use of those means which God has provided for enabling us to form and practise them. No other final causes, it would appear, can be assigned for the peculiar manner in which we are governed in the present life ; and if the deterring and correcting severity on the one hand, and the alluring and instructive kindness on the other, which mark the divine administration, continue throughout life ; if, in every period of his life here, man is capable, by the use of the prescribed means, of forming new habits and renouncing old ones, and thus of accomplishing the purposes of the moral discipline under which he is placed ; then is he in a state of trial throughout life ; and if so, he is accountable for the whole course of his life, and his

ultimate reward or punishment must be in a state subsequent to the present.

It is also the doctrine of Scripture, that this future punishment of the incorrigible shall be final and unlimited ; another matter of great importance in considering the doctrine of atonement. This is a monitory doctrine which a revelation only could unfold ; but, being made, it has no inconsiderable degree of rational evidence. It supposes, it is true, that no future trial shall be allowed to man, the present having been neglected and abused ; and to this there is much analogy in the constant procedures of the divine government in the present life. When many checks and admonitions from the instructions of the wise, and the examples of the froward, have been disregarded, poverty and sickness, infamy and death ensue, in a thousand cases which the observation of every man will furnish ; the trial of an individual, which is to issue in his present happiness or misery, is terminated ; and so far from its being renewed frequently, in the hope of his finally profiting by a bitter experience, advantages and opportunities, once thrown away, can never be recalled. There is nothing, therefore, contrary to the obvious principles of the divine government as manifested in this life, in the doctrine which confines the space of man's highest and most solemn probation within certain limits, and beyond them cutting off all his hope. But let this subject be considered by the light thrown upon it by the fact, that the nature of man is immortal. With those who deny this to be the prerogative of the thinking principle in man, it would be trifling to hold this argument ; but with those who do not, the consideration of the subject under this view is important.

The existence of man is never to cease. It follows then from this, that either the future trials to be allowed to those who in the present life have been incorrigible, are to be limited in number, or, should they successively fail, are to be repeated for ever. If the latter, there can be no ultimate judgment, no punishment or reward ; and, consequently, the divine government, as implying these, (and this we know it does, from what takes place in the present life,) must be

annihilated. If this cannot be maintained, is there sufficient reason to conclude, that all to whom trial after trial is supposed to be afforded in new and varied circumstances, in order to multiply the probabilities, so to speak, of their final recovery from rebellion, will be at length reclaimed? Before this can be answered, it must be recollected, that a state of suffering which would compel obedience, if we should suppose mere suffering capable of producing this effect, or an exertion of influence upon the understanding and will which shall necessitate a definite choice, is neither of them to be assumed as entering into the condition of any new state of trial. Every such future trial, to be probationary at all, that is, in order to bring out the existence of a new moral principle, and by voluntary acts to prove it, must substantially be like the present, though its circumstances may vary. Vice must have its allurements; virtue must rise from self-denial, and be led into the arena to struggle with difficulty; many present interests and pleasures must be seen in connexion with vice; the rewards of obedience must, as now, be not only more refined than mere sense can be gratified with, but also distant: The mind must be capable of error in its moral estimate of things, through the influence of the senses and passions; and so circumstanced, that those erroneous views shall only be prevented or corrected by watchfulness and a diligent application to meditation, prayer, and the use of those means of information on moral subjects which Almighty God may have put within their reach. We have no right in this argument to imagine to ourselves a future condition where the influence of every circumstance will be directed to render vice most difficult to commit, and virtue most difficult to avoid; for this would not be a state of trial: And if, in this present life, men have obstinately resisted all admonitions from heaven; obdurate themselves against all the affecting displays of the divine kindness, and the deterring manifestations of the divine majesty; it is most reasonable to conclude, that a part of them at least would abuse successive trials, and frustrate their intention, by attachment to present and sensual gratification. What then is to become of them? If we admit a moral

government of rational creatures at all, their probation cannot be eternal, for that leads to no result: If probation be appointed, it implies accountability, a judicial decision, and that judicial decision, in the case of the incorrigible, punishment. Whenever then the trial, or the series of trials, terminates as to these immortal beings, the subsequent punishment, of what kind soever it may be, must be eternal. This doctrine of Scripture rests therefore upon others, of which the rational evidence is abundant and convincing;—that Almighty God exercises a moral government over his creatures; that the present life is a state of moral discipline and trial; and that man is immortal. If these are allowed, the eternal duration of future punishments, as to the obstinately wicked, must follow; and its accordance with the principles just mentioned is its rational evidence.

That atonement for the sins of men which was made by the death of Christ is represented in the Christian system as the means by which mankind may be delivered from this awful catastrophe,—from judicial inflictions of the displeasure of a Governor whose authority has been contemned, and whose will has been resisted, which shall know no mitigation in their degree, nor bound to their duration; and if an end, supremely great and benevolent, can commend any procedure to us, the scriptural doctrine of atonement commends this kind of appeal to our attention. This end it professes to accomplish by means which, with respect to the supreme Governor himself, preserve his character from mistake, and maintain the authority of his government; and with respect to man, give him the strongest possible reason for hope, and render more favourable the condition of his earthly probation. These are considerations which so manifestly show, from its own internal constitution, the superlative importance and excellence of Christianity, that it would be exceedingly criminal to overlook them.

How sin may be forgiven without leading to such misconceptions of the divine character as would encourage disobedience, and thereby weaken the influence of the divine government, must be considered as a problem of very difficult

solution. A government which admitted no forgiveness would sink the guilty to despair ; a government which never punishes offence is a contradiction, it cannot exist. Not to punish, is to dissolve authority ; to punish without mercy, is to destroy ; and, where all are guilty, to make the destruction universal. That we cannot sin with impunity, is a matter determined. The Ruler of the world is not careless of the conduct of his creatures ; for that penal consequences are attached to offence, is not a subject of argument, but is made evident from daily observation of the events and circumstances of the present life. It is a principle therefore already laid down, that the authority of God must be preserved ; and it ought to be observed, that, in that kind of administration which restrains evil by penalty, and encourages obedience by favour and hope, we and all moral creatures are the interested parties, and not the divine Governor himself, whom, because of his independent and efficient nature, our transgressions cannot injure. The reasons, therefore, which compel him to maintain his authority, do not terminate in himself. If he becomes a party against offenders, it is for our sake, and for the sake of the moral order of the universe, to which sin, if encouraged by a negligent administration, and by entire or frequent impunity, would be the source of endless disorder and misery ; and if the granting of pardon to offence be strongly and even severely guarded, we are to refer it to the moral necessity of the case as arising out of the general welfare of accountable creatures, liable to the deep evil of sin, and not to any reluctance on the part of our Maker to forgive, much less to any thing vindictive in his nature,—charges which have been most inconsiderately and unfairly brought against the Christian doctrine of Christ's vicarious sufferings. If it then be true, that the relief of offending man from future punishment, and his restoration to the divine favour, ought, for the interests of mankind themselves, and for the instruction and caution of other beings, to be so bestowed, that no licence shall be given to offence ; that God himself, whilst he manifests his compassion, should not appear less just, less holy, than the maintenance of an efficient and even awful authority

demands ; that his commands shall be felt to be as compelling, and that disobedience shall as truly, though not so unconditionally, subject us to the deserved penalty, as though no hope of forgiveness had been exhibited ;—we ask, on what scheme, save that which is developed in the New Testament, are these necessary conditions provided for? Necessary they are, unless we contend for a licence and an impunity which shall annul the efficient control of the universe,—a point for which no reasonable man will contend ; and if not, then he must allow an internal evidence of the truth of the doctrine of Scripture, which makes the offer of pardon consequent only upon the securities we have before mentioned. If it be said, that sin may be pardoned in the exercise of the divine prerogative ; the reply is, that if this prerogative were exercised towards a part of mankind only, the passing-by of the others would be with difficulty reconciled to the divine character ; and if the benefit were extended to all, government would be at an end. This scheme of bringing men within the exercise of mercy does not therefore meet the obvious difficulty of the case ; nor is it improved by confining the act of grace only to repentant criminals. For in the immediate view of danger, what offender, surrounded with the wreck of former enjoyments, feeling the vanity of guilty pleasures, now past for ever, and beholding the approach of the delayed but threatened penal visitation, but would repent? Were this principle to regulate human governments, every criminal would escape, and judicial forms would become a subject for ridicule. Nor is it the principle upon which the divine Being in his conduct to men in the present state acts, though in this world punishments are not final and absolute. Repentance does not restore health injured by intemperance, property wasted by profusion, or character once stained by dishonourable practices. If repentance alone can secure pardon, then all must be pardoned, and government dissolved, as in the case of forgiveness by the exercise of mere prerogative : If a selection be made, then different and discordant principles of government are introduced into the divine administration, which is a derogatory supposition.

To avoid the force of these obvious difficulties, some have added reformation to repentance ; and would restrain forgiveness to those only who, to their penitence, add a course of future obedience to the divine law. In this opinion a concession of importance is made in favour of the doctrine of atonement, as stated in the Scriptures ; for we ask, “ Why should an act of grace be thus restricted ? ” Is not the only reason this,—which every one sees,—that to pardon offence either on mere prerogative, or on the condition of repentance, would annul every penalty, and consequently encourage vice ? The principle assumed, then, is, that vice ought not to be encouraged by an unguarded exercise of the divine mercy ; that the authority of government ought to be upheld ; that Almighty God ought not to appear indifferent to human actions, nor otherwise than as a God hating iniquity and loving righteousness. Now, precisely on these principles does the Christian doctrine of atonement rest. It carries them higher, it teaches that other means have been adopted to secure the object ; but the ends proposed are the same. And thus, to the principle on which that great doctrine rests, the objector can take no exception ; that point he has surrendered, and must confine himself to a comparison of the efficiency of the respective modes by which the purposes of moral government may be answered in the exercise of mercy to the guilty, in his own system, and in that of Christianity. We shall not, in order to prove the wisdom as well as the grace of the doctrine of the Bible on this subject, press our opponent with the fact, important as it is, that in the light vouchsafed unto us into the rules of the government of God over men with reference to the present state merely, we see no reason to conclude any thing with certainty as to the efficacy of reformation. A change of conduct does not, any more than repentance, repair the mischiefs of former misconduct : Even the sobriety of the reformed man does not always restore health ; and the industry and economy of the formerly negligent and wasteful repair not the losses of extravagance. Nor is it necessary to dwell upon the consideration that this theory involves, as to all the principles of government established among men, which, in

flagrant cases, never suspend punishment in anticipation of a change of conduct ; but which, in the infliction of penalty, look steadily to the crime actually committed, and to the necessity of vindicating the violated majesty of the laws. The argument might, indeed, be left here ; but we go farther, and show that the reformation anticipated is ideal, because it is impracticable.

To make this clear, it must be recollected that they who oppose this theory of human reconciliation to God to that of the Scriptures, leave out of it not only the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, but other important doctrines, and especially that agency of the Holy Spirit which awakens the thoughtless to consideration, and prompts and assists their efforts to attain a higher character, and to commence a new course of conduct. Man is, therefore, left, unassisted and uninfluenced, to his own endeavours, and in the peculiar unalleviated circumstances of his actual moral state. What that state is, we have already seen. It has been argued that nothing can account for the practical corruption of mankind, but a moral taint in our hearts, a propensity of nature to evil and not to good ; and that every other mode of accounting for the moral phenomena which the history of man and daily experience present, is inconclusive and contradictory. How, then, is this supposed reformation to commence ? We do not say, the exchange of one vice for another, that specious kind of reformation by which many are deceived ; for the objector ought to have the credit of intending a reformation which implies love to the purity of the divine commands, cordial respect for the authority of our Maker, and not partial, but universal, obedience. But if the natural, unchecked disposition of the mind is to evil, and supernatural assistance be disallowed, “ who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? ” To natural propension we are also to add, in this case,—as reformation is the matter in question,—the power of habit, proverbially difficult to break, though man is not, in fact, in the unassisted condition which the error now opposed supposes. The whole of this theory assumes human nature to be what it is not ; and a delusive conclusion must, therefore, necessarily result. If man be totally corrupt, the

only principles from which reformation can proceed do not exist in his nature ; and if we allow no more than that the propensity to evil in him is stronger than the propensity to good, it is absurd to suppose that, in opposing propensities, the weakest should resist the most powerful ; that the stream of the rivulet should force its way against the tides of the ocean. The reformation, therefore, which is to atone for his vices is impracticable.

The question proposed abstractedly—"How may mercy be extended to offending creatures, the subjects of the divine government, without encouraging vice, by lowering the righteous and holy character of God, and the authority of his government, in the maintenance of which the whole universe of beings are interested ?"—is, therefore, at once, one of the most important and one of the most difficult which can employ the human mind. None of the theories which have been opposed to Christianity afford a satisfactory solution of the problem ; they assume principles either destructive to moral government, or which cannot, in the circumstances of man, be acted upon. The only answer is found in the holy Scriptures ; they alone show, and, indeed, they alone profess to show, how God may be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. Other schemes show how he may be merciful ; but the difficulty does not lie there. This meets it by declaring the righteousness of God, at the same time that it proclaims his mercy. The voluntary sufferings of an incarnate divine Person for us, in our room and stead, magnify the justice of God, display his hatred of sin, proclaim the exceeding sinfulness of transgression, by the deep and painful sufferings of the Substitute, warn the persevering offender of the terribleness as well as the certainty of his punishment, and open the gates of salvation to every penitent. It is a part of the same divine plan to engage the influence of the Holy Spirit, to awaken that penitence, and to lead the wandering soul back to himself ; to renew the fallen nature of man in righteousness, at the moment he is justified, through faith, and to place him in circumstances in which he may henceforth "walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." All the ends of government are

here answered. No licence is given to offence; the moral law is unrepealed; the day of judgment is still appointed; future and eternal punishments still display their awful sanctions; a new and singular display of the awful purity of the divine character is afforded; yet pardon is offered to all who seek it; and the whole world may be saved.

With such evidence of suitableness to the case of mankind; under such lofty views of connexion with the principles and ends of moral government, does the doctrine of the atonement present itself. But other important considerations are not wanting, to mark the united wisdom and goodness of that method of extending mercy to the guilty, which Christianity teaches us to have been actually and exclusively adopted. It is rendered, indeed, "worthy of all acceptance," by the circumstance of its meeting the difficulties we have just dwelt upon; difficulties which could not otherwise have failed to make a gloomy impression upon every offender awakened to a sense of his spiritual danger; but it must be very inattentively considered if it does not further commend itself to us, by not only removing the apprehensions we might feel as to the justice of the divine Lawgiver, but as exalting him in our esteem as "the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness," who surrendered his beloved Son to suffering and death, that the influence of moral goodness might not be weakened in the hearts of his creatures; as a God of love, affording in this instance a view of the tenderness and benignity of his nature infinitely more impressive and affecting than any abstract description could convey, or than any act of creating and providential power and grace could furnish, and, therefore, most suitable to subdue that enmity which had unnaturally grown up in the hearts of his creatures, and which, when corrupt, they so easily transfer from a law which restrains their inclination to the Lawgiver himself. If it be important to us to know the extent and reality of our danger, by the death of Christ it is displayed, not in description, but in the most impressive action; if it be important that we should have assurance of the divine placability towards us, it here received a demonstration incapable of greater certainty; if gratitude is

the most powerful motive of future obedience, and one which renders command on the one part, and active service on the other, “not grievous but joyous,” the recollection of such obligations as those which the “love of Christ” has laid us under, is a perpetual spring to this energetic affection, and will be the means of raising it to higher and more delightful activity for ever. All that can most powerfully illustrate the united tenderness and awful majesty of God, and the odiousness of sin; all that can win back the heart of man to his Maker and Lord, and render future obedience a matter of affection and delight as well as duty; all that can extinguish the angry and malignant passions of man to man; all that can inspire a mutual benevolence, and dispose to a self-denying charity for the benefit of others; all that can arouse by hope, or tranquillize by faith; is to be found in the vicarious death of Christ, and the principles and purposes for which it was endured.

“Ancient history tells us of a certain King who made a law against adultery, in which it was enacted that the offender should be punished by the loss of both eyes. The very first offender was his own son. The case was most distressing; for the King was an affectionate father, as well as a just Magistrate. After much deliberation and inward struggle, he finally commanded one of his own eyes to be pulled out, and one of his son’s. It is easier to conceive than to describe what must have been the feelings of the son in these most affecting circumstances. His offence would appear to him in a new light; it would appear to him not simply as connected with painful consequences to himself, but as the cause of a father’s sufferings, and as an injury to a father’s love. If the King had passed over the law altogether in his son’s favour, he would have exhibited no regard for justice, and he would have given a very inferior proof of affection.

“If we suppose that the happiness of the young man’s life depended on the eradication of this criminal propensity, it is not easy to imagine how the King could more wisely or more effectually have promoted this benevolent object. The action was not simply a correct representation of the King’s character;

it also contained in itself an appeal most correctly adapted to the feelings of the criminal. It justified the King in the exercise of clemency ; it tranquillized the son's mind, as being a pledge of the reality and sincerity of his father's gracious purposes towards him ; and it identified the object of his esteem with the object of his gratitude. Mere gratitude, unattracted by an object of moral worth, could never have stamped an impression of moral worth on his character ; which was his father's ultimate design. We might suppose the existence of this same character without its producing such an action ; we might suppose a conflict of contending feelings to be carried on in the mind without evidencing, in the conduct flowing from it, the full vehemence of the conflict, or defining the adjustment of the contending feelings ; but we cannot suppose any mode of conduct so admirably fitted to impress the stamp of the father's character on the mind of the son, or to associate the love of right and the abhorrence of wrong with the most powerful instincts of the heart. The old man not only wished to act in perfect consistency with his own views of duty, but also to produce a salutary effect on the mind of his son ; and it is the full and effectual union of these two objects which forms the most beautiful and striking part of this remarkable history.

“ There is a singular resemblance between this moral exhibition, and the communication which God has been pleased to make of himself in the Gospel. We cannot but love and admire the character of this excellent Prince, although we ourselves have no direct interest in it ; and shall we refuse our love and admiration to the King and Father of the human race, who, with a kindness and condescension unutterable, has, in calling his wandering children to return to duty and to happiness, presented to each of us a like aspect of tenderness and purity, and made use of an argument which makes the most direct and irresistible appeal to the most familiar, and at the same time the most powerful, principles in the heart of man ?

“ A pardon without a sacrifice could have made but a weak and obscure appeal to the understanding or the heart. It could

not have demonstrated the evil of sin; it could not have demonstrated the graciousness of God; and therefore it could not have led man either to hate sin or to love God. If the punishment as well as the criminality of sin consists in an opposition to the character of God, the fullest pardon must be perfectly useless, whilst this opposition remains in the heart; and the substantial usefulness of the pardon will depend upon its being connected with such circumstances as may have a natural and powerful tendency to remove this opposition and create a resemblance. The pardon of the Gospel is connected with such circumstances; for the sacrifice of Christ has associated sin with the blood of a benefactor, as well as with our own personal sufferings; and obedience with the dying entreaty of a friend breathing out a tortured life for us, as well as with our own unending glory in his blessed society. This act, like that in the preceding illustration, justifies God as a lawgiver in dispensing mercy to the guilty; it gives a pledge of the sincerity and reality of that mercy; and, by associating principle with mercy, it identifies the object of gratitude with the object of esteem, in the heart of the sinner.”*

Inseparably connected with the great doctrine of atonement, and adapted to the new circumstances of trial in which the human race was placed in consequence of the lapse of our first parents, is the doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit; and this, though supposed by many to be farthest removed from rational evidence, can neither be opposed by any satisfactory argument, nor is without an obvious reasonableness.

The Scriptures represent man in the present state as subject

* *Remarks on the Internal Evidence of the Truth of Revealed Religion*, by Thomas Erskine, Esq.—This popular and interesting volume contains many very striking, just, and eloquent remarks in illustration of the internal evidence of several doctrines of the New Testament, and especially of that of the atonement. It is to be regretted, however, that it sets out from a false principle, and builds so much truth upon the sand. “The sense of moral obligation is the standard to which reason instructs man to adjust his system of natural religion,” and this is “the test by which he is to try all pretensions to religion.” The principle of the book, therefore, is to show the excellence of Christianity from its embodying the abstract principles of natural religion in intelligible and palpable action,—a gratuitous and unsubstantial foundation.

not only to various sensible excitements to transgression ; and as influenced to resist temptation by the knowledge of the law of God and its sanctions, by his own sense of right and duty, and by the examples of the evils of offence which surround him ; but also as solicited to obedience by the influence of the Holy Spirit, and to persevering rebellion by the seductions of evil spirits.

This is the doctrine of revelation ; and if the evidences of that revelation can be disproved, it may be rejected ; if not, it must be admitted, whether any argumentative proof can be offered in its favour or not. That it is not unreasonable, may be first established.

That God, who made us, and who is a pure Spirit, cannot have immediate access to our thoughts, our affections, and our will, it would certainly be much more unreasonable to deny than to admit ; and if the great and universal Spirit possesses this power, every physical objection, at least, to the doctrine in question is removed, and finite unbodied spirits may have the same kind of access to the mind of man, though not in so perfect and intimate a degree. Before any natural impossibility can be urged against this intercourse of spirit with spirit, we must know what no philosopher, however deep his researches into the causes of the phenomena of the mind, has ever professed to know,—the laws of perception, memory, and association. We can suggest thoughts and reasons to each other, and thus mutually influence our wills and affections. We employ for this purpose the media of signs and words ; but to contend, that these are the only media through which thought can be conveyed to thought, or that spiritual beings cannot produce the same effects immediately, is to found an objection wholly upon our ignorance. All the reason which the case, considered in itself, affords, is certainly in favour of this opinion. We have access to each other's minds ; we can suggest thoughts, raise affections, influence the wills of others ; and analogy, therefore, favours the conclusion, that, though by different and latent means, unbodied spirits have the same access to each other, and to us.

If no physical impossibility lies against this representation

of the circumstances of our probation, no moral reason certainly can be urged against the principle itself, which makes us liable to the contrary solicitations of other beings. That God our heavenly Father should be solicitous for our welfare, is surely to be admitted; and that there may be invisible beings who are anxious, from various motives, some of which may be conceived, and others are unknown, to entice us to evil, is made probable by this, that among men every vicious character seeks a fellowship in his vices, and employs various arts of seduction, even when he has no interest in success, that he may not be left to sin alone. In point of fact, we see this principle of moral trial in constant operation with respect to our fellow-creatures. Who is not counselled, and warned, and entreated, by the good? Who is not invited to offence by the wicked? What are all the instructive, enlightening, and influential institutions which good and benevolent men establish and conduct, but means by which others may be drawn and influenced to what is right? And what are all the establishments and devices to multiply the gratifications and pleasures of mankind, but means employed by others to encourage religious trifling, and indifference to things devout and spiritual, and often to seduce to vice in its grossest forms? The principle is therefore in manifest operation; and he who would except to this doctrine of Scripture, must also except to the divine government, as it is manifested in the facts of experience; which government clearly makes it a circumstance of our probation in this world, that our opinions, affections, and wills should be subject to the influence of others, both for good and evil.

By reference to this fact, we may also show the futility of the objection to the doctrine of supernatural influence, which is drawn from the free agency of man. The Scriptures do not teach that supernatural influence, either good or bad, destroys our freedom and accountability. How then, it is asked, is the one to be reconciled with the other? The answer is, that we are sure they are not incompatible, because, though we may be strongly influenced and solicited to good or evil conduct by virtuous or vicious persons; though they may

enforce their respective wishes by arguments, or persuasions, or hopes, or fears ; though they may carefully lead us into circumstances which may be most calculated to undermine or to corroborate virtuous resolutions ; we are yet conscious that we are at liberty either to yield or to resist ; and on this consciousness, equally common to all, is founded that common judgment of the conduct of those who, though carefully well advised, or assiduously seduced, are always treated as free agents in public opinion, and praised or censured accordingly. The case is the same where the influence is supernatural, only the manner in which it is applied is different. In one it operates upon the springs which most powerfully move the will and affections from without ; in the other it is more immediately from within ; but in neither case is it to be supposed that any other beings can will or choose for us. The *modus operandi* in both cases may be inexplicable ; but whilst the power of influencing our choice may belong to others, the power of choosing is exclusively and necessarily our own.

Since, therefore, no reason, physical or moral, can be urged against the doctrine of divine influence ; since the principle on which it is founded, as a circumstance in our trial on earth, is found to accord entirely with the actual arrangements of the divine government in other cases, every thing is removed which might obstruct our view of the excellence of this encouraging tenet of divine revelation. The moral helplessness of man has been universally felt, and universally acknowledged. To see the good and to follow the evil, has been the complaint of all ; and precisely to such a state is the doctrine of divine influence adapted. As the atonement of Christ stoops to the judicial destitution of man, the promise of the Holy Spirit meets the case of his moral destitution. The one finds him without any means of satisfying the claims of justice, so as to exempt him from punishment ; the other, without the inclination or the strength to avail himself even of proclaimed clemency, and offered pardon, and becomes the means of awakening his judgment, and exciting, and assisting, and crowning his efforts to obtain that boon, and its consequent blessings. The one relieves him from the penalty, the other

from the disease, of sin ; the former restores to man the favour of God, the other renews him in his image.

To this emigent adaptation of the doctrine to the condition of man, we may add the affecting view which it unfolds of the divine character. That tenderness and compassion of God to his offending creatures ; that reluctance that they should perish ; that divine and sympathizing anxiety, so to speak, to accomplish their salvation, which were displayed by the cross of Christ, are here in continued and active manifestation. A divine agent is seen seeking, in order that he may save, that which is lost ; following the lost sheep into the wilderness, that he may bring it home rejoicing ; delighting to testify of Christ, because of the salvation he has procured ; to accompany with his influence his written revelation, because that alone contains words by which men may be saved ; affording special assistance to Ministers, because they are the messengers of God proclaiming peace ; and, in a word, knocking at the door of human hearts ; arousing the conscience ; calling forth spiritual desires ; opening the eyes of the mind, more clearly to discern the meaning and application of the revealed word ; and mollifying the heart to receive its effectual impression ; doing this too without respect of persons, and making it his special office and work to convince the mistaken ; to awaken the indifferent ; to comfort the penitent and humble ; to plant, and foster, and bring to maturity, in the hearts of the obedient, every grace and virtue. These are views of God which we could not have had but for this doctrine ; and the obvious tendency of them is, to fill the heart with gratitude for a condescension so wonderful and a solicitude so tender ; to impress us with a deep conviction of the value of renewed habits, since God himself stoops to work them in us ; and to admonish us of the infinite importance of a personal experience of the benefits of Christ's death, since the means of our pardon and sanctification unapplied can avail us nothing.

We may add, (and it is no feeble argument in favour of the excellence of this branch of Christian doctrine,) that we are thereby encouraged to aspire after a loftier character of moral purity, and a more perfect state of virtue ; as well as to engage

in more difficult duties. Were we left wholly to our own resources, we should despair; and, perhaps, it is exactly in proportion to the degree in which this promise of the Holy Spirit is apprehended by those who truly receive Christianity, that they advance to the standard of possible moral attainment. That God should work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure, is a reason why we should work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; for as our freedom is not destroyed, as even the Spirit may be grieved and quenched, our fall would be unspeakably aggravated by our advantages. But the operation of God within us is also a motive to the working our salvation out, to the perfecting of our sanctification even to eternal life. None can despair of conquering any evil habit, who steadily look to this great doctrine, and cordially embrace it; none can despair of being fully renewed again in the image of God, when they know that it is one of the offices of the Holy Spirit to effect this renovation; and none who habitually rest upon the promise of God, for all that assistance which the written word warrants them to expect in difficult and painful duties, and in those generous enterprises for the benefit of others in which a hallowed zeal may lead them to engage, will be discouraged in either. In the name of God such persons have, in all ages, lifted up their banners, and have thus been elevated into a decision, a boldness, an enterprise, a perseverance, which no other consideration or trust could inspire. Such are the practical effects of this doctrine. It prompts to attainments in inward sanctity and outward virtue, which it would have been chimerical to consider possible but for the aid of a divine influence; and it leads to exertion for the benefit of others, the success of which would otherwise be too doubtful to encourage the undertaking.

It would be easy to adduce many other doctrines of our religion, which, from their obvious excellency and correspondence with the experience and circumstances of mankind, furnish much interesting internal evidence in favour of its divinity. But as this would greatly exceed the limits of a chapter, and as those doctrines have been considered against

which the most strenuous objections from pretended rational principles have been urged ; the moral state and condition of man, the atonement made by the death of Christ for the sins of the world, and the influences of the Holy Spirit ;—it may have been sufficient for the argument to have shown that even such doctrines are accompanied with important and interesting reasons ; and that they powerfully commend Christianity to universal acceptance. What has been said is to be considered only as a specimen of the rational proof which accompanies many of the doctrines of revelation, and which a considerate mind may with ease enlarge by numerous other instances drawn from its precepts, its promises, and those future and ennobling hopes that it sets before us. The wonderful agreement in doctrine among the writers of the numerous books of which the Bible is composed, who lived in ages very distant from each other, and wrote under circumstances as varied as can well be conceived, may properly close this part of the internal evidence. “In all the bearings, parts, and designs of the book of God, we shall find a most striking harmony, fitness, and adaptation of its component parts to one beautiful, stupendous, and united whole ; and that all its parts unite and terminate in a most magnificent exhibition of the glory of God, the lustre of his attributes, the strict and true perfection of his moral government, the magnitude and extent of his grace and love, especially as manifested in the salvation and happiness of man, in his recovery from moral pravity, and restoration to a capacity of acquiring happiness eternal.”* This argument is so justly and forcibly expressed in the following quotation, as to need no further elucidation :—

“The sacred volume is composed by a vast variety of writers, men of every different rank and condition, of every diversity of character and turn of mind ; the Monarch and the plebeian, the illiterate and learned, the foremost in talent and the moderately-gifted in natural advantages, the historian and the legislator, the orator and the poet, each has his peculiar province ; ‘some Prophets, some Apostles, some Evangelists,’

* Lloyd's *Horæ Theologicæ*.

living in ages remote from each other, under different modes of civil government, under different dispensations of the divine economy, filling a period of time which reached from the first dawn of heavenly light to its meridian radiance. The Old Testament and the New, the Law and the Gospel, the Prophets predicting events, and the Evangelists recording them, the doctrinal yet didactic epistolary writers, and he who closed the sacred canon in the apocalyptic vision ; all these furnished their respective portions, and yet all tally with a dove-tailed correspondence ; all the different materials are joined with a completeness the most satisfactory, with an agreement the most incontrovertible.

“ This instance of uniformity without design, of agreement without contrivance ; this consistency maintained through a long series of ages, without a possibility of the ordinary methods for conducting such a plan ; these unparalleled congruities, these unexampled coincidences, form altogether a species of evidence of which there is no other instance in the history of all the other books in the world.

“ All these variously-gifted writers here enumerated concur in this grand peculiarity,—that all have the same end in view, all are pointing at the same object, all, without any projected collusion, are advancing the same scheme ; each brings in his several contingent, without any apparent consideration how it may unite with the portions brought by other contributors, without any spirit of accommodation, without any visible intention to make out a case, without, indeed, any actual resemblance more than that every separate portion being derived from the same spring, each must be governed by one common principle ; and that principle being truth itself, must naturally and consentaneously produce assimilation, conformity, agreement. What can we conclude from all this, but what is, indeed, the inevitable conclusion ; a conclusion which forces itself on the mind, and compels the submission of the understanding,—that all this, under differences of administration, is the work of one and the same great omniscient and eternal Spirit ?” *

The second branch of the internal evidence of the Scriptures consists of their moral tendency ; and here, as in doctrine, the believer may take the highest and most commanding ground.

If, as to the truths revealed in them, the before unknown God—unknown even to the philosophers of Athens—has been declared unto us ; if the true moral condition, dangers, and hopes of man have been revealed ; if the kindness and goodwill of God our Saviour towards man has appeared ; if the true propitiation has been disclosed, and the gates of salvation opened ; if, through the promised influences of the Holy Spirit, the renewal of our natures in the image of God originally borne by man—the image of his holiness—is made possible to all who seek it ; if we have, in the consentaneous system of doctrine which we find in the Scriptures, every moral direction which can safely guide, every promise which can convey a blessing suitable to our condition, and every hope which can at once support under suffering, and animate us to go through our course of trial, and aspire to the high rewards of another life ; the moral influence of such a system is as powerful as its revelations of doctrine are lofty and important.

One of the most flagrant instances of that malignity of heart with which some infidel writers have assailed the Scriptures, and which, more than any thing, shows that it is not the want of evidence, but an hostility arising from a less creditable source, which leads them, in the spirit of enmity and malice, wilfully to libel what they ought to adore, is, that they have boldly asserted the Bible to have an immoral tendency. For this, the chief proof which they pretend to offer is, that it records the failings and the vices of some of the leading characters in the Old and New Testaments.

The fact is not denied ; but they suppress what is equally true,—that these vices are never mentioned with approbation ; that the characters stained with them are not, in those respects, held up to our imitation ; and that their frailties are recorded for admonition. These men dwell upon the crimes of David, and sneer at his being called “ a man after God’s own heart ;

but they suppress the fact that he was so called long before the commission of those crimes ; and that he was not, at any time, declared to be acceptable to God with reference to his private conduct as a man, but in respect of his public conduct as a King. Nor do they state that these crimes are, in the same Scriptures, represented as being tremendously visited by the displeasure of the Almighty, both in the life of David, and in the future condition of his family. From such objections the Bible can suffer nothing, because the injustice of their attacks implies a constrained homage to the force of truth. Even this very objection furnishes so strong an argument in favour of the sincerity and honesty of the sacred writers, that it confirms their credibility in that which unbelievers deny, as well as in those relations which they are glad, for a hostile purpose, to admit. Had the Scriptures been written by cunning impostors, such acknowledgments of crimes and frailties in their most distinguished characters, and in some of the writers themselves, would not have been made.

“ The Evangelists all agree in this most unequivocal character of veracity,—that of criminating themselves. They record their own errors and offences with the same simplicity with which they relate the miracles and sufferings of their Lord. Indeed, their dulness, mistakes, and failings are so intimately blended with his history, by their continual demands upon his patience and forbearance, as to make no inconsiderable or unimportant part of it. This fidelity is equally admirable both in the composition and in the preservation of the Old Testament ; a book which every where testifies against those whose history it contains, and, not seldom, against the relaters themselves. The author of the Pentateuch proclaims, in the most pointed terms, the ingratitude of those chosen people towards God ; he prophesies that they will go on filling up the measure of their offences ; calls heaven and earth to witness against them that he has delivered his own soul ; and declares that as they have worshipped gods which were no gods, God will punish them, by calling a people who were no people. Yet this book, so disgraceful to their national character, this register of their own offences,

they would rather die than lose. ‘This,’ says the admirable Pascal, ‘is an instance of integrity which has no example in the world, no root in nature.’ In the Pentateuch and the Gospels, therefore, these parallel, these unequalled, instances of sincerity are incontrovertible proofs of the truth of both.”*

It is but just to say, that the malignant absurdity and wickedness of charging the Scriptures with an immoral tendency, have not been incurred by all who have even zealously endeavoured to undermine their divine authority. Many of them make important concessions on this point. They show in their own characters the effect of their unbelief, and probably the chief cause of it: Blount committed suicide, because he was prevented from an incestuous marriage, Tyndal was notoriously infamous. Hobbes changed his principles with his interests. Morgan continued to profess Christianity while he wrote against it. The moral character of Voltaire was mean and detestable. Bolingbroke was a rake, and a flagitious politician. Collins and Shaftesbury qualified themselves for civil offices by receiving the sacrament, whilst they were endeavouring to prove the religion of which it is a solemn expression of belief, a mere imposture. Hume was revengeful, disgustingly vain, and an advocate of adultery and self-murder. Paine was the slave of low and degrading habits; and Rousseau, an abandoned sensualist, and guilty of the basest actions, which he scruples not to state and palliate. Yet even some of these have admitted the superior purity of the morals of the Christian revelation. The eloquent eulogium of Rousseau on the Gospel and its Author is well known; it is a singular passage, and shows that it is the state of the heart, and not the judgment, which leads to the rejection of the testimony of God.†

* Mrs. More’s Character of St. Paul.

† “I will confess to you that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers; with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work

Nor is it surprising that a truth so obvious should, even from adversaries, extort concession. Nowhere but in the Scriptures have we a perfect system of morals; and the deficiencies of pagan morality only exalt the purity, the comprehensiveness, the practicability of ours. The character of the Being acknowledged as supreme must always impress

of man? Is it possible that the sacred Personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast, or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manners! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness and without ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary good man with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he described exactly the character of Jesus Christ; the resemblance was so striking that all the Christian Fathers perceived it.

“What prepossession, what blindness, must it be to compare the son of Sophronicus [Socrates] to the son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion is there between them! Socrates, dying without pain or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any thing more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to precept. But where could Jesus learn among his competitors that pure and sublime morality of which he only has given us both precept and example? The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophizing with his friends, appears the most agreeable that could be wished for; that of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonizing pains, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, in the midst of excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes; if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the marks of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty, without obviating it: It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction, and strangers to the morality, contained in the Gospel; the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing man than the hero.”

itself upon moral feeling and practice ; the obligation of which rests upon his will. We have seen the views entertained by Pagans on this all-important point, and their effects. The God of the Bible is "holy" without spot ; "just" without intermission or partiality ; "good," boundlessly benevolent and beneficent ; and his law is the image of himself, "holy, just, and good." These great moral qualities are not, as with them, so far as they were apprehended, merely abstract, and therefore comparatively feeble in their influence : In the person of Christ, our God incarnate, they are seen exemplified in action, displaying themselves amidst human relations, and the actual circumstances of human life. With them, the authority of moral rules was either the opinion of the wise, or the tradition of the ancient, confirmed, it is true, in some degree, by observation and experience ; but to us, they are given as commands immediately from the supreme Governor, and ratified as his by the most solemn and explicit attestations. With them, many great moral principles, being indistinctly apprehended, were matters of doubt and debate ; to us, the explicit manner in which they are given excludes both : For it cannot be questioned, whether we are commanded to love our neighbour as ourselves ; to do to others as we would that they should do to us,—a precept which comprehends almost all relative morality in one plain principle ; to forgive our enemies ; to love all mankind ; to live righteously and soberly, as well as godly ; that Magistrates must be a terror only to evil-doers, and a praise to them that do well ; that subjects are to render honour to whom honour, and tribute to whom tribute, is due ; that masters are to be just and merciful, and servants faithful and obedient. These, and many other familiar precepts, are too explicit to be mistaken, and too authoritative to be disputed ; two of the most powerful means of rendering law effectual. Those who never enjoyed the benefit of revelation, never conceived justly and comprehensively of that moral state of the heart from which right and beneficent conduct alone can flow ; and therefore when they speak of the same virtues as those enjoined by Christianity, they are to be understood as attaching to them a lower idea.

In this the infinite superiority of Christianity displays itself. The principle of obedience is not only a sense of duty to God, and the fear of his displeasure ; but a tender love, excited by his infinite compassions to us in the gift of his Son, which shrinks from offending. To this influential motive, as a reason of obedience, is added another, drawn from its end ; one not less influential, but which heathen moralists never knew,—the testimony that we please God, manifested in the acceptance of our prayers, and in spiritual and felicitous communion with him. By Christianity, impurity of thought and desire is restrained in an equal degree as their overt acts in the lips and conduct. Humanity, meekness, gentleness, placability, disinterestedness, and charity are all as clearly and solemnly enjoined as the grosser vices are prohibited ; and on the unruly tongue itself is impressed the law of kindness. Nor are the injunctions feeble ; they are strictly law, and not mere advice and recommendations. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord ;” and thus our entrance into heaven, and our escape from perdition, are made to depend upon this preparation of mind. To all this is added possibility, nay, certainty, of attainment, if we use the appointed means. A Pagan could draw, though not with lines so perfect, a *beau ideal* of virtue, which he never thought attainable ; but “the full assurance of hope” is given by the religion of Christ to all who are seeking the moral renovation of their nature ; because “it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

When such is the moral nature of Christianity, how obvious is its beneficial tendency both as to the individual and to society ! From every passion which wastes, and burns, and frets, and enfeebles the spirit, the individual is set free, and his inward peace renders his obedience cheerful and voluntary ; and we might appeal to infidels themselves, whether, if the moral principles of the Gospel were wrought into the hearts, and embodied in the conduct of all men, the world would not be happy ; whether if governments ruled and subjects obeyed by the laws of Christ ; whether if the rules of strict justice which are enjoined upon us regulated all the transactions of

men, and all that mercy to the distressed which we are taught to feel and to practise came into operation ; and whether, if the precepts, which delineate and enforce the duties of husbands, wives, masters, servants, parents, children, fully and generally governed all these relations, a better age than that called "golden" by the poets, would not be realized, and Virgil's

Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna,

be far too weak to express the mighty change ? Such is the tendency of Christianity. On immense numbers of individuals it has superinduced these moral changes ; all nations, where it has been fully and faithfully exhibited, bear, amidst their remaining vices, the impress of its hallowing and benevolent influence ; it is now in active exertion in many of the darkest and worst parts of the earth, to convey the same blessings ; and he who would arrest its progress, were he able, would quench the only hope which remains to our world, and prove himself an enemy, not only to himself, but to all mankind. What then, we ask, does all this prove, but that the Scriptures are worthy of God, and propose the very ends which rendered a revelation necessary ? Of the whole system of practical religion which it contains we may say, as of that which is embodied in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, in the words of one, who, in a course of sermons on that divine composition, has entered most deeply into its spirit, and presented a most instructive delineation of the character which it was intended to form : "Behold Christianity in its native form, as delivered by its great Author. See a picture of God, as far as he is imitable by man, drawn by God's own hand. What beauty appears in the whole ! How just a symmetry ! What exact proportion in every part ! How desirable is the happiness here described ! How venerable, how lovely is the holiness !"* "If," says Bishop Taylor, "wisdom, and mercy, and justice, and simplicity, and holiness, and purity, and meekness, and contentedness, and charity, be images of God, and rays of divinity, then

that doctrine, in which all these shine so gloriously, and in which nothing else is ingredient, must needs be from God. If the holy Jesus had come into the world with less splendour of power and mighty demonstrations, yet the excellency of what he taught makes him alone fit to be the Master of the world.”*

Internal evidence of the truth of the Scriptures may also be collected from their style. It is various, and thus accords with the profession, that the whole is a collection of books by different individuals ; each has his own peculiarity so strongly marked, and so equally sustained throughout the book or books ascribed to him, as to render this a forcible proof of genuineness. The style of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the Evangelists, and St. Paul, are all strikingly different. The writers of the New Testament employ Hebrew idioms, words, and phrases. The Greek in which they wrote is not classical Greek ; but, as it is observed by Bishop Marsh, “is such a dialect as would be used by persons educated in a country where Chaldee or Syriac was spoken as the vernacular tongue, but who also acquired a knowledge of Greek by frequent intercourse with strangers.” This, therefore, affords an argument from internal evidence, that the books were written by the persons whose names they bear ; and it has been shown by the same Prelate, that, as this particular style was changed after the destruction of Jerusalem, the same compound language could not be written in any other age than the first century ; and proof is obtained from this source also in favour of the antiquity of the Scriptures of the New Testament. An argument, to the same point of antiquity, is drawn by Michaëlis from the accordancy of the evangelic history and the apostolical Epistles with the history and manners of the age to which they refer. “A Greek or Roman Christian,” he observes, “who lived in the second or third century, though as well versed in the writings of the ancients as Eustathius or Asconius, would still have been wanting in Jewish literature ; and a Jewish convert in those ages, even the most learned

* Moral Demonstration of the Truth of the Christian Religion.

Rabbi, would have been equally deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome. If then the New Testament, thus exposed to detection, (had it been an imposture,) is found, after the severest researches, to harmonize with the history, the manners, and the opinions of the first century; and since the more minutely we inquire, the more perfect we find the coincidence; we must conclude that it was beyond the reach of human abilities to effectuate so wonderful a deception."

The manner of the sacred writers is also in proof that they were conscious of the truth of what they relate. The whole narrative is simple and natural. Even in the accounts given of the creation, the flood, the exodus from Egypt, and the events of the life and death of Christ, where designing men would have felt most inclined to endeavour to heighten the impression by glowing and elaborate description, the same chastened simplicity is preserved. "These sober recorders of events the most astonishing are never carried away, by the circumstances they relate, into any pomp of diction, into any use of superlatives. There is not, perhaps, in the whole Gospel a single interjection, not an exclamation, nor any artifice to call the reader's attention to the marvels of which the relaters were the witnesses. Absorbed in their holy task, no alien idea presents itself to their mind; the object before them fills it. They never digress; are never called away by the solicitations of vanity, or the suggestions of curiosity. No image starts up to divert their attention. There is, indeed, in the Gospels much imagery, much allusion, much allegory; but they proceed from their Lord, and are recorded as his. The writers never fill up the intervals between events. They leave circumstances to make their own impression, instead of helping out the reader by any reflections of their own. They always feel the holy 'ground on which they stand. They preserve the gravity of history and the severity of truth, without enlarging the outline or swelling the expression.'"*

Another source of internal evidence, arising from incidental coincidences, which, from "their latency and minuteness,"

* Mrs. More's Character of St. Paul.

must be supposed to have their foundation in truth, is opened, and ably illustrated, by Dr. Paley, in his *Horæ Paulinæ*, a work which will well repay the perusal.

Much of the collateral evidence of the truth of the Scriptures generally, and of Christianity in particular, has been anticipated in the course of this discussion, and need not here be resumed. The agreement of the final revelation of the will of God by the ministry of Christ and his Apostles with former authenticated revelations, has been pointed out ; so that the whole constitutes one body of harmonious doctrines, gradually introduced, and at length fully unfolded and confirmed. The suitableness of the Christian revelation to the state of the world at the time of its communication, follows from the view we have given of the necessity, not only of a revelation generally, but of such a revelation as the mercy of God has vouchsafed to the world through his Son. It has also been shown, that its historical facts accord with the credible histories and traditions of the same times ; that monuments remain to attest its truth, in the institutions of the Christian church ; and that adversaries have made concessions in its favour.* Our further remarks on this subject, though many other interesting particulars might be embraced, must be confined to two particulars, but each of a very convincing character. The first is, the marvellous diffusion of Christianity in the first three centuries ; the second is, the actual beneficial effect produced, and which is still producing, by Christianity upon mankind.

With respect to the first, the fact to be accounted for is, that the first Preachers of the Gospel, though unsupported by human power, and uncommended by philosophic wisdom, and even in opposition to both, succeeded in effecting a revolution in the opinions and manners of a great portion of the civilized world, to which there is no parallel in the history of mankind.†

* The collateral testimony to certain facts mentioned in Scripture, from coins, medals, and ancient marbles, may be seen well applied in Horne's Introduction to the Study of the Scriptures, vol. i., p. 238.

† The success of Mahomet, though sometimes pushed forward as a parallel, is, in fact, both as to the means employed, and the effect produced, a perfect

“Though aspersed by the slander of the malicious, and exposed to the sword of the powerful, in a short period of time they induced multitudes of various nations, who were equally distinguished by the peculiarity of their manners, and the diversity of their language, to forsake the religion of their ancestors. The converts whom they made deserted ceremonies and institutions, which were defended by vigorous authority, sanctified by remote age, and associated with the most alluring gratification of the passions.”*

After their death the same doctrines were taught, and the same effects followed, though successive and grievous persecutions were waged against all who professed their faith in Christ, by successive Emperors and inferior Magistrates. Tacitus, about A.D. 62, speaking of Christianity, says, “This pernicious superstition, though checked for a while, broke out again, and spread not only over Judea, but reached the city of Rome also. At first they only were apprehended who confessed themselves to be of that sect; afterwards a vast multitude were discovered and cruelly punished.” Pliny, the Governor of Pontus and Bithynia, near eighty years after the death of Christ, in his well-known letter to Trajan, observes, “The contagion of this superstition has not only invaded cities, but the smaller towns also, and the whole country.” He speaks too of the idol-temples having been almost forsaken. To the same effect the Christian Fathers speak. About A.D. 140, Justin Martyr writes, “There is not a nation, Greek or barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, among whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and

contrast. The means were conquest and compulsion; the effect was to legalize and sanctify, so to speak, the natural passions of men for plunder and sensual gratification; and it surely argues either a very frail judgment, or a criminal disposition, to object, that a contrast so marked should ever have been exhibited as a correspondence. Men were persuaded, when they were not forced, to join the ranks of the Arabian impostor by the hope of plunder, and a present and future life of brutal gratification. Men were persuaded to join the Apostles by the evidence of truth, and by the hope of future spiritual blessings, but with the certainty of present disgrace and suffering.

* Kett's Sermons at the Bampton Lecture.

Creator of the universe in the name of the crucified Jesus." In A.D. 190, Tertullian, in his *Apology*, appeals to the Roman Governors: "We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities and towns; the camp, the senate, and the forum." In A.D. 220, Origen says, "By the good providence of God the Christian religion has so flourished and increased, that it is now preached freely, and without molestation." These representations, Gibbon contends, are exaggerations on both sides, produced by the fears of Pliny, and the zeal of the Christian Fathers. But even granting some degree of exaggeration arising not designedly from warm feelings, an unquestionable occurrence proves the futility of the exceptions taken to these statements by the elegant but infidel historian. The great fact is, that in the year A.D. 300, Christianity became the established religion of the Roman Empire, and Paganism was abolished; and it follows from this event, that the religion which thus became triumphant after unparalleled trials and sufferings, must have established itself, previously to its receiving the sanction of the state, in the belief of a great majority of the one hundred and twenty millions of people supposed to be contained in the empire, or no Emperor would have been insane enough to make the attempt to change the religion of so vast a state, nor, had he made it, could he have succeeded.

The success of Christianity in the three centuries preceding Constantine, has justly been considered as in no unimportant sense miraculous, and, as such, an illustrious proof of its divinity. "The obstacles which opposed the first reception of Christianity were so numerous and formidable, and the human instruments employed for its diffusion so apparently weak and insufficient, that a comparison between them will not only show that the passions and opposition of man, far from impeding the divine designs, may ultimately become the means of their perfect accomplishment, but will fully demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity by displaying the powerful assistance which the Almighty supplied for its establishment."* The astonishing success of Christianity

* Kett's Sermons.

under such circumstances, and at so early a period, affords a strong confirmation of the truth of miracles, because it implies them, as no other means can be conceived by which an attention so general should have been excited to a religion which was not only without the sanction of authority and rank, but opposed by both; the scene of whose facts lay in a province the people of which were despised; and whose doctrines held out nothing but spiritual attainments. By the effect of miracles during the lives of the first Preachers, public curiosity was excited, and they obtained an audience which they could not otherwise have commanded. This power of working miracles was transmitted to their successors, and continued until the purposes of infinite Wisdom were accomplished. They decreased in number in the second century, and left but a few traces at the close of the third.* The increase of Christians implied even more than miracles: Such was the holy character of the majority, during the continuance of the reproach and persecutions which followed the Christian name; such the patience with which they suffered, and the fortitude with which they died; that the influence of God upon their hearts is as manifest in the new and hallowed character which distinguished them, and the meek, forgiving, and passive virtues which they exhibited, to the astonishment of the Heathen, as his power in the miracles by which their attention was first drawn to examine that truth which they afterwards believed and held fast to death.

The actual effect produced by this new religion upon society, and which it is still producing, is another point in the collateral evidence: For Christianity has not only an adaptation for improving the condition of society; its excellence is not only to be argued from its effects stated on hypo-

* Attempts have been made to deny the existence of miraculous powers in the ages immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, but it stands on the unanimous and successive testimony of the Fathers. Gibbon, on this subject, has borrowed his objections from *The Free Inquiry* of Dr. Middleton, whose belief in Christianity is very suspicious. This book received many able answers; but none more so than one by the Rev. John Wesley. It is a triumph to truth to state, that Dr. Middleton felt himself obliged to give up his ground by shifting the question.

thetical circumstances ; but it has actually won its moral victories, and in all ages has exhibited its trophies. In every pagan country where it has prevailed, it has abolished idolatry, with its sanguinary and polluted rites. It also effected this mighty revolution, that the sanctions of religion should no longer be in favour of the worst passions and practices, but be directed against them. It has raised the standard of morality, and by that means, even where its full effects have not been suffered to display themselves, has insensibly improved the manners of every Christian state. What heathen nations are, in point of morals, is now well known ; and the information on this subject, which for several years past has been increasing, has put it out of the power of infidels to urge the superior manners of either China or Hindostan. It has abolished infanticide and human sacrifices, so prevalent among ancient and modern Heathens ; put an end to polygamy and divorce ; and by the institution of marriage in an indissoluble bond, has given birth to a felicity and sanctity in the domestic circle which it never before knew. It has exalted the condition and character of woman, and by that means has humanized man, given refinement and delicacy to society, and created a new and important affection in the human breast,—the love of woman founded on esteem ; an affection generally unknown to Heathens the most refined.* It abolished domestic slavery in ancient Europe ; and from its principles the struggle which is now maintained with African slavery draws its energy, and promises a triumph as complete.† It has given a milder character to war, and taught modern nations to treat their prisoners with humanity, and to restore them by exchange to their respective countries. It has laid the basis of a jurisprudence more just and equal ; given civil rights to subjects, and placed restraints on absolute power ; and crowned its achievements

* Among the Greeks, the education of women was chiefly confined to courtesans.

† Since the death of Mr. Watson, the triumph of Christianity, here anticipated, has been achieved. Slavery has been abolished in the British Colonies ; and this great national measure promises to lead to a similar result throughout the civilized world.—EDIT.

by its charity. Hospitals, schools, and many other institutions for the aid of the aged and the poor, are almost exclusively its own creations, and they abound most where its influence is most powerful. The same effects to this day are resulting from its influence in those heathen countries into which the Gospel has been carried by Missionaries sent out from this and other Christian states. In some of them idolatry has been renounced ; infants, and widows, and aged persons, who would have been immolated to their gods, or abandoned by their cruelty, have been preserved, and are now “the living to praise its divine Author, as they do at this day.” In other instances the light is prevailing against the darkness ; and those systems of dark and sanguinary superstition which have stood for ages only to pollute and oppress, without any symptom of decay, now betray the shocks they have sustained by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and nod to their final fall.*

• For an ample illustration of the actual effects of Christianity upon society, see Bishop Porteus’s *Beneficial Effects of Christianity*, and Ryan’s *History of the Effects of Religion on Mankind*.

CHAPTER XX.

Miscellaneous Objections answered.

THE system of revealed religion contained in the Old and New Testaments—being opposed to the natural corrupt inclinations, and often to the actual practice, of men ; laying them under rules to which they are averse ; threatening them with a result which they dread ; holding out to them no pleasures but such as they distaste, and no advantages but those which they would gladly exchange for a perpetual life of sinful indulgence on earth—will be regarded by many of the most reflecting among them as a system of restraint ; and must therefore often excite either direct hostility, or a disposition to encourage and admit suggestions tending to weaken its authority. It may be added, that, as the Scriptures cannot be known without careful examination, which implies a serious habit not to be found in the majority, objections have been often raised by ingenious men in great ignorance of the volume itself against which they are directed ; and being sometimes urged on the ground of some popular view of a fact or doctrine, they have been received as carelessly as they were uttered. Philosophers, too, have sometimes constructed hasty theories on various subjects, which have either contradicted, or been thought to contradict, some parts of the Scriptures ; and the array of science, and the fascination of novelty, have equally deceived and misled the theorist himself and his disciples. Since the revival of letters, and in countries where freedom of discussion has been allowed, objectors have arisen, and numerous attempts have been made to shake the faith of mankind. That specious kind of infidelity known by the name of “ Deism ” made its appearance in Italy and France about the middle of the sixteenth century, and in England early in the seventeenth. Under this appellation, and that of “ the

Religion of Nature," each adopted to deceive the unwary, the attack upon Christianity was at first cautious, and accompanied with many professions of regard for its manifold excellencies. Lord Herbert of Cherbury was the first who in this country advocated this system. He lays down five primary articles of religion, as containing every thing necessary to be believed ; and as he contends they are all discoverable by our natural faculties, they supersede, he informs us, the necessity of a revelation. They are,—that there is a supreme God ; that he is chiefly to be worshipped ; that piety and virtue are the principal part of his worship ; that repentance expiates offence ; and that there is a state of future rewards and punishments. The history of infidelity from this time is a striking comment upon the words of St. Paul : " But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived : " For, in the progress of this deadly error, all Lord Herbert's five articles of natural religion have been questioned or given up by those who followed him in his fundamental principle, " that nothing can be admitted which is not discoverable by our natural faculties." Hobbes, who succeeded next in this warfare against the Bible, if he acknowledges that there is a God, represents him as corporeal, and our duty to him as a chimera, the civil Magistrate being supreme in all things both civil and sacred. Shaftesbury insists that the doctrine of rewards and punishments is degrading to the understanding, and detrimental to moral virtue. Hume denies the relation between cause and effect, and thus attempts to overthrow the argument for the existence of God from the frame of the universe. By others, the worship of God, which Lord Herbert advocates, has been rejected as unreasonable, because he needs not our praises, and is not to be turned from his purposes by our prayers. As all law, of divine authority, is on this system renounced, so " piety and virtue " must be understood to be what every man chooses to consider them, which amounts to their annihilation ; and as for future reward and punishment, philosophy, since Lord Herbert's days, has discovered that the soul of man is material ; or rather, being a mere result of the organization of the body, that it dies with it.

The great principle of the English proto-infidel—the sufficiency of our natural faculties to form a religion for ourselves, and to decide upon the merits of revealed truth—is, however, the principle of all; and this being once conceded, the instances just given are sufficiently in proof that the cable is slipped, and that every one is left to take his course wherever the winds and the currents may impel his unpiloted, uncharted, and uncompassed bark. This grand principle of error, between which and absolute Atheism there are but a few steps, has been largely refuted in the foregoing pages, and the claims of the holy Scriptures to be considered as a revelation from God, established by arguments the force of which, in all other cases, is felt, and acknowledged, and acted upon, even by unbelievers themselves. If this has been done satisfactorily, the objections which remain are of little weight, were they even less capable of being repelled; and if no answer can be found to some of the difficulties which may be urged, this circumstance is much more in accordance with the truth of a revelation, than it would be with its falsehood. “We do not deny,” says an excellent writer on the *Evidences of Christianity*,* “that the scheme of revelation has its difficulties; for if the things of nature are often difficult to comprehend, it would be strange indeed if supernatural matters were so simple, and obvious, and suited to finite capacities, as never to startle and puzzle us at all. He who denies the Bible to have come from God because of these difficulties, may, for exactly the same reason, deny that the world was formed by him.”

The mere cavils of infidel writers may be hastily dismissed; the most plausible objections shall be considered more at large. As to the former, few of them could have been urged if those who have adduced them had consulted the works of commentators, and biblical critics, writings with which it is evident they have little acquaintance; and thus they have shown how ill-disposed they have been to become fully acquainted with the facts and doctrines which they have subjected to their criticism. To this may be added their ignorance of the idiom

* Dr. Olinthus Gregory.

of the Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament; their inattention to the ancient manners and customs of the countries where the sacred writers lived; to occasional errors in the transcription of numerous copies, which may be rectified by collation; and to the different readings, which, to a candid criticism, would generally furnish the solution of the difficulty.

The Bible has been vehemently assaulted because it represents God as giving command to the Israelites to exterminate the nations of Canaan; but a few remarks will be sufficient to prove how little weight there is in the charges which, on this account, have been made against the author of the Pentateuch. The objection cannot be argued upon the mere ground that it is contrary to the divine justice or mercy to cut off a people indiscriminately, from the eldest to the youngest, since this is done in earthquakes, pestilences, &c.: The cholera morbus, which has been for four years past wasting various parts of Asia, has, probably, destroyed half a million of persons of all ages. The character of the God of nature is not, therefore, contradicted by that ascribed to the God of the Bible. The whole objection resolves itself into this question, "Was it consistent with the character of God to employ human agents in this work of destruction?" Who can prove that it was not? No one; and yet here lies the whole stress of the objection. The Jews were not rendered more cruel by their being so commissioned; for we find them much more merciful in their institutions than other ancient nations. Nor can this instance be pleaded in favour of exterminating wars; for there was in the case a special commission for a special purpose, and by that it was limited. Other considerations are also to be included: The sins of the Canaanites were of so gross a nature that it was necessary to mark them with signal punishments, for the benefit of surrounding nations; the employing of the Israelites as instruments, under a special and publicly-proclaimed commission, connected the punishment more visibly with the offence than if it had been inflicted by the array of warring elements; whilst the Israelites themselves would be more deeply impressed with the guilt of idolatry, and its ever-accompanying polluted and sanguinary rites; and, finally, the

Canaanites had been long spared, and, in the mean time, both warned by partial judgments, and reprov'd by the remaining adherents of the patriarchal religion who resided among them.

Thus the objection rests upon no foundation. The destruction of infants, so often dwelt upon, takes place in nature and providence. The objection to the employment of human agents, arising from habits of inhumanity being thereby induced, assumes what is false in fact; for this effect upon the Jews was prevented by the circumstance of their knowing that they acted as ministers of the divine displeasure, and under the commission of God himself; and some important reasons may be discovered for executing the judgment by men, and especially this,—that it might exhibit the evil of a sanguinary and obscene idolatry.

That law in Deuteronomy which authorizes parents, the father and the mother, to bring a stubborn and rebellious son, who was also a glutton and a drunkard, before the elders of the city, that, if guilty, he might be stoned, has been called inhuman and brutal. In point of fact, it was, however, a merciful regulation. In almost all ancient nations parents had the power of taking away the lives of their children; this was a branch of the old patriarchal authority which did not all at once merge into the kingly governments that were afterwards established. There is reason, therefore, to believe that it was possessed by the heads of families among the Israelites, and that this was the first attempt to control it, by obliging the crimes alleged against their children to be proved before regular Magistrates, and thus preventing the effects of unbridled passions.

The intentional offering of Isaac by Abraham has also had its share of censure. The answer is, 1. That Abraham, who was in the habit of sensible communication with God, could have no doubt of the divine command, and of the right of God to take away the life he had given. 2. That he proceeded to execute the command of God in faith, as the Apostle Paul has stated, that God would raise his son from the dead. The whole transaction was extraordinary, and cannot, therefore, be judged by common rules; and it could

only be fairly objected to if it had been so stated as to encourage human sacrifices. Here, however, are sufficient guards: An indubitable divine command was given; the sacrifice was prevented by the same authority; and the history stands in a book which represents human sacrifices as an abomination to God.

Indelicacy and immodesty have been charged upon some parts of the Scriptures. This objection has something in it which indicates malignity rather than an honest and principled exception; for in no instance are any statements made in order to incite impurity; and nothing, throughout the whole Scripture, is represented as more offensive to God, or as more certainly excluding persons from the kingdom of heaven, than the unlawful gratification of the senses. It is also to be noted, that many of the passages objected to are in the laws and prohibitions of both Testaments; and as well might the statute and common law of this country be made the subject of reprehension, and be held up as tending to encourage vices of various kinds, because they must, with more or less of circumstantiality, describe them. We are further to take into account the simplicity of manners and language in early times. We observe, even among the peasantry of modern states, a language, on the subjects referred to, which is more direct, and what refined society would call gross; but greater real indelicacy does not necessarily follow. Countries and classes of people might be pointed out where the language which expresses sensual indulgence has more of caution and of periphrasis, whilst the known facts show that their morals are exceedingly polluted.

Several objections which have been raised against characters and transactions in the books of Judges, Samuel, and Kings, are dissipated by the single consideration that, where they are obviously immoral or unjustifiable, they are never approved, and are merely stated as facts of history. The conduct of Ehud, of Samson, and of Jephthah, may be given as instances.

The advice of David, when on his death-bed, respecting Joab and Shimei, has been attributed to his private resent-

ment. This is not the fact; he spoke in his character of King and Magistrate, and gave his advice on public grounds, as committing the kingdom to his son.

The conduct of David, also, towards the Ammonites, in putting them “under saws and harrows of iron,” has been the subject of severe animadversion. But the expression means no more than that he employed them in laborious works, as sawing, making iron harrows, hewing wood, and making bricks; the Hebrew prefix signifying “to,” as well as “under.” “He put them to saws, and harrows of iron,” (some render it “iron mines,”) “and to axes of iron, and made them to pass through the brick-kiln.”

With respect to the imprecations found in many parts of Scripture, and which have been represented as expressions of revenge and malice, it has been often and satisfactorily observed, that they are predictions, and not anathemas, the imperative mood being put for the future tense, according to the Hebrew idiom.

These have been adduced as specimens of the objections urged by infidel writers against the Scriptures, and of the ease with which they may be met. For others of a similar kind, and for answers to objections founded upon supposed contradictions between different passages of Scripture, reference must be made to commentators.* With respect to all of them it has been well observed, “that a little skill in the original languages of the Scriptures, their idioms, and properties, and in the times, occasions, and scope of the several books, as well as in the antiquities and customs of those countries which were the scenes of the transactions recorded, will always clear the main difficulties.”

To some other objections, of a philosophical kind, as being of a more imposing aspect, the answers may be more extended.

Between natural philosophy and revelation,—the book of nature and the book of God,—it has been a favourite practice with unbelievers to institute a contrast, and to set the plain-

* See also a copious collection of these supposed contradictions, with judicious explanations, in the Appendix to vol. i. of Horne's Introduction, &c.

ness and uncontradictory character of the one against the mysteries and difficulties of the other. The common ground on which all such objections rest is an unwillingness to admit as truth, and to receive as established and authorized doctrine, what is incomprehensible. They contend that if a revelation has been made, there can be no mystery in it, for that is a contradiction; and that if mysteries—that is, things incomprehensible—are held to be a part of it, this is fatal to its claims as a revelation. The sophism is easily answered. Many doctrines, many duties are comprehensible enough; no mystery at all is involved in them; and as to incomprehensible subjects, nothing is more undoubted, as we have already shown, than that a fact may be the subject of revelation,—as that God is eternal and omnipresent,—and still remain mysterious and incomprehensible. The fact itself is not hidden, or expressed in language or symbol so equivocal as to throw the meaning into difficulty,—the only sense in which the argument could be valid. As a fact, it is clearly revealed that these are attributes of the divine Nature; but both, notwithstanding that clear and indubitable revelation, are still incomprehensible. It is not revealed how God is eternal and omnipresent, nor is such a revelation pretended; but it is revealed that he is so; not how a trinity of persons exists in unity of essence, but that such is the mode of the divine existence. If, however, men hesitate to admit incomprehensible subjects as matters of faith, they cannot be permitted to fly for relief from revelation to philosophy, and much less to set up its superior claims, as to clearness of manifestation, to the holy Scriptures. There, too, it will be seen, that mystery and revelation go inseparably together; that he who will not admit the mystery cannot have the benefit of the revelation; and that he who takes the revelation of facts embraces, at the same time, the mystery of their causes. The facts, for instance, of the attraction of gravitation, of cohesion, of electricity, of magnetism, of congelation, of thawing, of evaporation, are all admitted. The experimental and inductive philosophy of modern times has made many revelations of the relations and, in some instances, of the proximate causes of these pheno-

mena ; but the real causes are all confessedly hidden. With respect to mechanics, says a writer who has devoted his life to philosophical studies,* “ this science is conversant about force, matter, time, motion, space ; each of these has occasioned the most elaborate disquisitions, and the most violent disputes. Let it be asked, ‘ What is force ? ’ If the answerer be candid, his reply will be, ‘ I cannot tell so as to satisfy every inquirer, or so as to enter into the essence of the thing.’ Again, ‘ What is matter ? ’ ‘ I cannot tell.’ ‘ What is motion ? ’ ‘ I cannot tell.’ And so of the rest. The fact of the communication of motion from one body to another is as inexplicable as the communication of divine influences. How, then, can the former be admitted with any face, while the latter is denied, solely on the grounds of its incomprehensibility ?

“ But perhaps I may be told, that, although things which are incomprehensible occur in our physical and mixed inquiries, they have no place in ‘ pure mathematics, where all is not only demonstrable, but intelligible.’ This, again, is an assertion which I cannot admit ; and for the denial of which I shall beg leave to produce my reasons, as this will, I apprehend, make still more in favour of my general argument. Now, here it is known, geometricians can demonstrate that there are curves which approach continually to some fixed right line, without the possibility of ever meeting it. Such, for example, are hyperbolas, which continually approach towards their asymptotes, but cannot possibly meet them, unless an assignable finite space can become equal to nothing. Such, again, are conchoids, which continually approach to their directrices, yet can never meet them, unless a certain point can be both beyond and in contact with a given line at the same moment. Mathematicians can also demonstrate that a space infinite in one sense may, by its rotation, generate a solid of finite capacity ; as is the case with the solid formed by the rotation of a logarithmic curve of infinite length upon its axis, or that formed by the rotation of an Apollonian hyperbola upon its asymptote. They can also show in numerous instances that

* Dr. Gregory’s Letters on the Christian Religion.

a variable space shall be continually augmenting, and yet never become equal to a certain finite quantity; and they frequently make transformations with great facility and neatness, by means of expressions to which no definite ideas can be attached. Can we, for example, obtain any clear comprehension, or indeed any notion at all, of the value of a power whose exponent is an acknowledged imaginary quantity, as $x\sqrt{-1}$? Can we, in like manner, obtain any distinct idea of a series constituted of an infinite number of terms? In each case the answer, I am convinced, must be in the negative. Yet the science, in which these and numerous other incomprehensibles occur, is called *Mathesis*, 'the discipline,' because of its incomparable superiority to other studies in evidence and certainty, and, therefore, its singular adaptation to discipline the mind. How does it happen, now, that when the investigation is bent towards objects which cannot be comprehended, the mind arrives at that in which it acquiesces as certainty, and rests satisfied? It is not, manifestly, because we have a distinct perception of the nature of the objects of the inquiry; (for that is precluded by the supposition, and, indeed, by the preceding statement;) but because we have such a distinct perception of the relation which those objects bear one towards another, and can assign positively, without danger of error, the exact relation, as to identity or diversity, of the quantities before us, at every step of the process."

Modern astronomy has displayed the immense extent of the universe, and by analogical reasoning has made it probable, at least, that the planets of our system and of others may be inhabited by rational and moral beings like ourselves; and from these premises infidel philosophy has argued, with apparent humility, for the insignificance of the human race, and the improbability of supposing that a divine Person should have been sent into this world for its instruction and salvation, when, in comparison with the solar system, it is but a point, and that system itself, in comparison of the universe, may be nothing more.

Plausible as this may appear, nothing can have less weight, even if only the philosophy and not the theology of the case

be taken into consideration. The intention with which man is thus compared with the universe is, to prove his insignificance; and the comparison must be made either between man and the vastness of planetary and stellar matter, or between the number of mankind and the number of supposed planetary inhabitants. If the former, we may reply with Dr. Beattie, "Great extent is a thing so striking to our imagination, that sometimes, in the moment of forgetfulness, we are apt to think nothing can be important but what is of vast corporeal magnitude. And yet, even to our apprehension, when we are willing to be rational, how much more sublime and more interesting an object is a mind like that of Newton, than the unwieldy force and brutal stupidity of such a monster as the poets describe Polyphemus! Who that had it in his power would scruple to destroy a whale, in order to save a child? Nay, when compared with the happiness of one immortal mind, the greatest imaginable accumulation of inanimate substance must appear an insignificant thing. 'If we consider,' says Bentley, 'the dignity of an intelligent being, and put that in the scale against brute and inanimate matter, we may affirm, without overvaluing human nature, that the soul of one virtuous man is of greater worth and excellency, than the sun and his planets, and all the stars in the world.' Let us not, then, make bulk the standard of value, or judge of the importance of man from the weight of his body, or from the size or situation of the planet that is now his place of abode."

To the same effect an ingenious and acute writer remarks upon a passage in Saussure, (*Voyages dans les Alpes*,) who speaks of men in the phrase of the modern philosophy, as "the little beings which crawl upon the surface of the earth," and as shrinking into nothing, both as to "space and time," in comparison with the vast mountains, and "the great epochs of nature." "If," says Mr. Granville Penn,* "there is any sense or virtue in this reflection, it must consist in duly estimating the relative importance of the two magnitudes and

* Comparative Estimate of the Mineral and Mosaic Geologies.

urations ; and in concluding logically the comparative insignificance of the smaller. And it will then necessarily follow, that the insignificance of the smaller would lessen, in the same proportion in which it might increase in bulk. If the little beings, therefore, were to be magnified in the proportions of two, three, four, &c., their insignificance, relatively to the great features of the globe, would necessarily diminish in the same ratio. The smaller the disproportion between the man and the mountain, the less would be the relative insignificance of the former ; and although the increase of magnitude in the smaller object be ever so inconsiderable, yet if it is positive and real, its dignity must be proportionately increased in the true nature of things : The bigger the being that crawls upon the surface of this globe, the less absurd would be the supposition that he is the final object of this terrestrial creation. The Irish giant, therefore, whose altitude exceeded the measure of eight feet, would exceed in relative dignity, by the same proportion, Bacon and Newton, whose height did not attain to six feet. If this is nonsense, then must that also be nonsense from which it is the genuine conclusion ; namely, that the material magnitudes of the little beings, or their duration upon the earth on which they ‘crawl,’ determines, in any manner, their importance in the creation, relatively to the primordial mountains which arise above it, or to the extent of the regions which may be surveyed from their summits. For, if the same physically small beings possess another magnitude, which can be brought to another and a different scale of computation from that of physical or material magnitude ; a scale infinitely surpassing in importance the greatest measures of that magnitude ; then there will be nothing astonishing or irrational in the supposition, that the highest mountains, and the widest regions, and the entire system to which they pertain, may be subservient to the ends of those beings, and to that other system to which they pertain ; which latter will thus be found superior in importance to the former. Such a scale is that, by which the intelligent, moral, and immortal nature of man is to be measured, and which the sacred historian calls a formation ‘after the image and likeness of God ;’ a scale so little taken

into the contemplation of the science of mere physics. As soon, however, as that moral scale of magnitude once supersedes the physical scale in the apprehension of the mind ; as soon as the mind perceives that the duration of that intelligent moral nature infinitely exceeds the vastest ‘ epocha of nature ’ which the imagination of the mineral geology can represent to itself, and that, though the physical nature of man is limited to a very small measure of time, yet his moral nature is unlimited in time, and will outlast all the mountains of the globe ; it then perceives, at the same moment, the counterfeit quality of the reflection, which at first appeared so sublime and so humble, so profound and so devout. The sublimity and humility betray themselves to be the disparagement and degradation of our nature ; the profundity is found to be mere surface, and the devotion to be a retrocession from the light of revelation.”

If the comparison of man with mere material magnitude will not then support this effort to effect his degradation, and to shame him out of his trust in the loving-kindness of his God ; if the comparison be made between things which have no relations in common, and is, therefore, absurd ; as little will it serve this unnatural attempt to prostrate man to an insect rank, and to inspire him with reptile feelings, to conclude his insignificance from the number of other beings. For it is plain that their number alters not his real character ; he is still immortal though myriads beside him are immortal, and still he has his deep capacity of pleasure and of pain. Unless, therefore, it could be proved, that the care of God for each must be diminished as the number of his creatures is increased, there is, as Mr. Penn has stated it, neither “ sense nor virtue ” in such reflections upon the littleness of man ; and they imply, indeed, a base and an unworthy reflection upon the supreme Creator himself, as though he could not bestow upon all the beings he has made a care and a love adequate to their circumstances. What man is with respect to God, can only be collected from the divine procedures towards him ; and these are sufficient to excite the devout exclamations of the Psalmist : “ What is man, that thou art mindful of him ?

or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" That he has not only been made by God, but that he is also governed by his providence, none but Atheists will deny; but any argument drawn from such premises as the above would conclude as forcibly against Providence, as it can be made to conclude against redemption. "Our Saviour," says Dr. Beattie, "as if to obviate objections of this nature, expresses most emphatically the superintending care of Providence, when he teaches, that it is God who adorns the grass of the field, that without him a sparrow falls not on the ground, and that even the hairs of our head are numbered. Yet this is no exaggeration; but must, if God is omniscient and almighty, be literally true. By a stupendous exuberance of animal, vegetable, and mineral production, and by an apparatus still more stupendous (if that were possible) for the distribution of light and heat, he supplies the means of life and comfort to the short-lived inhabitants of this globe. Can it then appear incredible; nay, does not this consideration render it in the highest degree probable, that he has also prepared the means of eternal happiness for beings, whom he has formed for eternal duration, whom he has endowed with faculties so noble as those of the human soul, and for whose accommodation chiefly, during their present state of trial, he has provided all the magnificence of this sublunary world?"

There is, however, another consideration, which gives a sublime and overwhelming grandeur to the Scripture view of the redemption of the race of man, and of which, for the want of acquaintance with our sacred writings, infidel philosophers appear never to have entertained the least conception. It is the moral connexion of this world with the whole universe of intelligent creatures; and the "intention" there was in the divine Mind to convey to other beings, by the history and great results of his moral government over one branch of his universal family, a view of his own perfections; of the duties and dangers of created and finite beings; of transgression and holiness in their principles and in their effects; by a course of action so much more influential than abstract truth. Intimations of this great and impressive view

are found in various passages of the New Testament, and it opens a scene of inconceivable moral magnificence, “to the intent, that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” *

It has been objected to the Mosaic chronology, that it fixes the era of the creation only about four thousand years earlier than the Christian era; and against this, evidence has been brought from two sources,—the chronology of certain ancient nations, and the structure of the earth.

The objections drawn from the former of these sources have of late rapidly weakened, and are, in fact, given up by many whose deference to the authority of Scripture is very slight; though but a few years ago nothing was more confidently urged by sceptical writers than the refutation of Moses by the Chinese, Hindoo, and Egyptian chronologies, founded, as it was then stated, on very ancient astronomical observations preserved to the present day. It is, however, now clearly proved, that the astronomical tables, from which it has been attempted to assign a prodigious antiquity to the Hindoos, have been calculated backwards; † and among the Chinese the earliest astronomical observation that appears to rest upon

* “In this our first period of existence, our eye cannot penetrate beyond the present scene, and the human race appears one great and separate community; but with other worlds, and other communities, we probably may, and every argument for the truth of our religion gives us reason to think that we shall, be connected hereafter. And if by our behaviour we may, even while here, as our Lord positively affirms, heighten in some degree the felicity of angels, our salvation may hereafter be a matter of importance, not to us only, but to many other orders of immortal beings. They, it is true, will not suffer for our guilt, nor be rewarded for our obedience. But it is not absurd to imagine, that our fall and recovery may be useful to them as an example; and that the divine grace manifested in our redemption may raise their adoration and gratitude into higher raptures, and quicken their ardour to inquire, with ever new delight, into the dispensations of infinite Wisdom. This is not mere conjecture. It derives plausibility from many analogies in nature, as well as from holy writ, which represents the mystery of our redemption as an object of curiosity to superior beings, and our repentance as an occasion of their joy.”—DR. BEATTIE’S *Evidences of the Christian Religion*. See also Dr. Chalmers’s Discourses on the Modern Astronomy.

† Cuvier’s Theory of the Earth.

good grounds, is now found to be one made not more than two thousand nine hundred years ago.* As for the conclusion drawn from the supposed zodiacs in the temples of Esneh and Dendara in Egypt, it is now strongly doubted whether the figures represented upon them are astronomical or mythological, that is, whether they are zodiacs at all. Their astronomical character is strongly denied by Dr. Richardson, a late traveller, who examined them with great care, and who gives large reasons for his opinion. Even if the astronomical character of these assumed zodiacs be allowed, they are found to prove nothing. M. Biot, an eminent French mathematician, has recently fixed the date of the oldest of them at only 716 years before Christ.

Against the excessive antiquity assigned to some ancient states, or claimed by them, the science of geology has at length entered its protest; and though, as we shall presently see, it has originated chronological objections to the Mosaic date of the creation, on the origin of nations it has made a full concession to the history of the Scriptures. Cuvier observes, "By a careful investigation of what has taken place on the surface of the globe since it has been laid dry for the last time, and its continents have assumed their present form, at least in such parts as are somewhat elevated above the level of the ocean, it may be clearly seen that this revolution, and, consequently, the establishment of our existing societies, could not have been very ancient."† D'Aubuisson remarks, "that the soils of all the plains were deposited in the bosom of a tranquil water; that their actual order is only to be dated from the retreat of that water; and that the date of that period is not very ancient."‡ "Dolomieu, Saussure, De Luc, and the most distinguished naturalists of the age, have coincided in this conclusion, to which they have been led by the evidence of various monuments and natural chronometers which the earth exhibits; and which remain perpetual vouchers for the veracity of the Mosaic chronology, with

* Cuvier's Theory of the Earth.

+ Ibid.

‡ *Traité de Géognosie.*

respect to the epocha of the revolution which the Mosaical history relates."*

From the absence of all counter-evidence in the records of ancient nations, as well as from these philosophical conclusions, which are to be considered in the light of concessions made to the chronology of the Pentateuch, we may, therefore, conclude that, as to the origin of nations and the period of the general deluge, the testimony of Scripture remains unshaken.

Geology has, however, objected to the Mosaic date of the creation of the earth, which, it is said, affords a period too limited to account for various phenomena which modern researches have brought under consideration. To the last general inundation of the earth, it is allowed, that no higher a date can be assigned than that which Moses ascribes to the flood of Noah; but several revolutions, each of which has changed the surface of the earth, are contended for, separated from each other by long intervals of time; and, above all, it is assumed, that the elements of the primitive earths were contained in an "original chaotic fluid," and that, in obeying the laws of the affinity of composition, they coalesced and grouped themselves together in different manners, and settled themselves into order, according to certain laws of matter, after an unassignable series of ages. These are the views of Cuvier, D'Aubuisson, De Luc, and other eminent writers on the subject; and whatever they themselves might intend, they have been made use of by infidels to discredit the authority of the sacred historian. It has been replied, that the Bible

* Penn's Comparative Estimate, &c. Professor Jameson, in his *Mineralogical Illustrations of Cuvier's Theory*, observes, "The front of Salisbury Crags, near Edinburgh, affords a fine example of the natural chronometer, described in the text. The acclivity is covered with loose masses that have fallen from the hill itself; and the quantity of debris is in proportion to the time which has elapsed since the waters of the ocean formerly covered the neighbouring country. If a vast period of time had elapsed since the surface of the earth had assumed its present aspect, it is evident, that long ere now the whole of this hill would have been enveloped in its own debris. We have here then a proof of the comparatively short period since the waters left the surface of the globe,—a period not exceeding a few thousand years."

not being intended to teach philosophy, it is not fair to try it by a philosophical standard. This, however, cannot be maintained in the case before us, though the observation is pertinent in others, as when the sun is said to have stood still, popular language being adopted to render the Scriptures intelligible. If Moses professes by divine inspiration to give an account of the manner in which the world was framed, he must describe the facts as they occurred; and if he has assigned a date to its creation out of nothing, that date, if given by an infallible authority, cannot be contradicted by true philosophy.

To allow time sufficient for the gradual processes of precipitation and crystallization, by which the first formations of the solid earth are said to have been effected, others have conceded to the geologists of this class that an antiquity of the earth, much higher than that which appears on the face of the Mosaic account, may be allowed, without contradicting it, and be even deduced from it. They therefore interpret the "days" mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis as successive periods of ages, and the evening and the morning of those days are made the beginnings and the ends of those imagined periods.* This interpretation is, however, too forced to be admitted in the case of so simple a narrative as that of Moses; and there would be as good a reason for thus extending the duration of the term "day," whenever it occurs in his writings, to an indefinite period, to the destruction of all chronological accuracy, and of all sobriety of writing. No true friend of revelation will wish to see Moses defended against the assaults of philosophy in a manner which, by obliging us to find a meaning in his writings far remote from the view of general readers, would render them inapplicable to the purpose of ordinary instruction. Besides, if we are to

* "Most readers have presumed that every night and day mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis must be strictly confined to the term of twenty-four hours, though there can be no doubt that Moses never intended any such thing; for how could Moses intend to limit the duration of the day to its present length before, according to his own showing, the sun had begun to divide the day from the night?"—MANTELL'S *Geology of Sussex*.

understand the first day to have been of indefinite length, a hundred, or a thousand, or a million of years, for instance, why not the seventh, the Sabbath, also? This opinion cannot, therefore, be consistently maintained; and we must conclude with Rosenmüller, *Dies intelligendi sunt naturales, quorum unusquisque ab unâ vespere incipiens, alterâ terminatur; quo modo Judæi, et multi alii antiquissimi populi, dies numerârunt*: "That we are to understand natural days; each of which, commencing from one evening, is terminated by the next; in which manner the Jews, and many other of the most ancient nations, reckoned days."

By other believers in revelation who have allowed the two principles laid down by geologists to go unquestioned,—namely, the original liquidity of the earth, holding the elements of all the subsequent formations in a state of solution; and the necessity of a long course of ages to complete those processes by which the earth should be brought into a fit state, so to speak, for the work of the six days; which, in that case, must be confined to mere arrangement,—another, and, certainly, a less objectionable, interpretation of Moses than that which makes his natural days and nights terms for indefinite periods of time, has been adopted. "Does Moses ever say that when God created the heavens and the earth, he did more, at the time alluded to, than transform them out of previously-existing materials? Or does he ever say that there was not an interval of many ages betwixt the first act of creation, described in the first verse of the book of Genesis, and said to have been performed at 'the beginning,' and those more detailed operations the account of which commences at the second verse, and which are described to us as having been performed in so many days? Or, finally, does he ever make us to understand that the genealogies of man went any further than to fix the antiquity of the species, and, of consequence, that they left the antiquity of the globe a free subject for the speculations of philosophers? We do not pledge ourselves for the truth of one or all of these suppositions; nor is it necessary we should. It is enough that any of them is infinitely more rational than the rejection of Christianity in the

face of historical evidence.”* “As to the period when this mass was made, Moses only says that it was ‘in the beginning ;’ a period; this, which might have been a million of years before its arrangement.”†

To all these suppositions, though not unsupported by the authority of some great critics, there are considerable objections ; and if the difficulty of reconciling geological phenomena with the Mosaic chronology were greater than it appears, none of them ought hastily to be admitted. That creation, in the first verse of Genesis, signifies production out of nothing, and not out of pre-existent matter,—though the original word may be used in both senses,—is made a matter of faith by the Apostle Paul, who tells us that “the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear ;” *μη εκ φαινομενων τα βλεπομενα γεγονεναι* ; which is sufficient to settle that point. By the same important passage it is also determined that “the worlds were produced in their form, as well as substance, instantly out of nothing ; or it would not be true that they were not made of things which do appear.” “The Apostle states that these things were not made out of a pre-existent matter ; for if they were, that matter, however extended or modified, must appear in that thing into which it is compounded and modified ; therefore it could not be said that ‘the things which are seen are not made of things that appear ;’ and he shows us, also, by these words, that the present mundane fabric was not formed or re-formed from one anterior, as some suppose.”‡ No interval of time is allowed, in the account of the creation by Moses, betwixt the creating and the framing of the worlds, (that is, the heavens and the earth simply,) so created and framed at once by the word of God. The natural sense, too, of the phrase “in the beginning” is also thus preserved. Thrown back, so to speak, into eternity, without reference to time, it has no meaning, or, at best, a very obscure one ; but connected with time, the commencement of our mundane chronology, it has a definite and obvious

* Chalmers’s Evidences of the Christian Revelation.

† Mantell’s Geology of Sussex.

‡ Dr. A. Clarke *in loc.*

sense. Moses begins his reckoning from the first creative act, from the creation of the heavens and the earth, which was, therefore, a part of the work of the first natural day. "In the first of these natural days the whole mineral fabric of this globe was formed at once, of such size and figure, with such properties, in such proportions to space, and with such arrangement of its materials, as most conduced to the ends for which God created it." *

It will now be observed, that if such interpretations of the Mosaic account cannot be allowed, the decisions of Scripture and some of the modern speculations in geology must be left directly to oppose each other; and that their hostility on this point cannot be softened by the advocates of accommodation. On this account no alarm need be felt by the believer, "for there is no counsel against the Lord;" and the progress of true philosophy will ever, in the result, add evidence to the truth of revelation. On the antiquity of the human race geology has been compelled already to give its testimony to the accuracy of Moses; and the time is probably not far distant when a similar testimony will be deduced from it as to the antiquity of the globe.

In what it now opposes that authority, it may serve to rebuke the dogmatism with which it has disputed the Scrip-

* This view is totally inconsistent with the favourite notion of certain modern geologists of a primitive chaotic ocean, containing, like that of the heathen poets, the elements of all things; a notion which those who wish to reconcile the account of Genesis with the modern geology have been willing to concede to them, on the ground that Moses has said that the earth was "without form and void." But they have not considered that it was "the earth," not a liquid mass, which is thus characterized; circumfused with water, it is true, but not mingled with it. The LXX render the phrase תהו ובהו, *tohu vabohu*, ἀορατος καὶ ἀκατασκευαστος, "invisible and unfurnished;" invisible both because of the darkness, and the water which covered it, and unfurnished because destitute as yet of vegetables and animals. "It is wonderful," says Rosenmüller, "how so many interpreters could imagine that a chaos was described in the words תהו ובהו, *tohu vabohu*. This notion unquestionably took its origin from the fictions of the Greek and Latin poets, which were transferred, by those interpreters, to Moses." Those fictions ground themselves, we may add, upon traditions received from the earliest times; but the additions of poetic fancy are not to be applied to interpret the Scriptures.

tures, to observe, that, strictly speaking, the science itself is not yet half a century old ; and is conversant, not with the surface of the earth only, but with its interior strata, which have been as yet but partially examined. It is, therefore, too early to theorize with so much confidence ; and the eager manner in which its hasty speculations have been taken up against the Mosaic account, can only remind thinking men of the equally eager manner in which the chronologies of China and Hindostan, and the supposed zodiacs of Egyptian temples, were once caught at, for the same reason, and, we may justly fear, from the same motives. It will, indeed, be time enough to enter into a formal defence of Moses when geologists agree among themselves on leading principles. Cuvier gives rather an amusing account of the odd and contradictory speculations of his scientific brethren ; * all of which he, of course, condemns, and fancies himself, as they all fancied themselves before him, a successful theorist. The vehemence with which the two great rival geological sects, the Neptunian and Plutonian, have disputed, to a degree almost unprecedented in the modern age of philosophy, adds but little authority to the decisions of either, inasmuch as the contest is grounded upon an assumed knowledge of facts, and therefore shows that the facts themselves are but indistinctly apprehended in their relations to each other, and that the collection of phenomena on both sides still needs to be arranged and systematized, under the guidance of some calm, and modest, and master mind.†

In all these speculations it is observable, that it is assumed at once that philosophy and the Mosaic account are incom-

* Theory, by Jameson, pages 41—47.

† Mons. L. A. Necker de Saussure, (*Voyage en Ecosse*,) speaking of the disputes between the Wernerians and Huttonians, says, "The former availed themselves of the ascendancy which a more minute study of minerals afforded, to depreciate the observations of their adversaries. They denied the existence of facts which the latter had discovered, or they tried to sink their importance. Hence it happened that phenomena, important to the natural history of the earth, have never been made known and appreciated as they ought to have been, by geologists most capable of estimating their consequences."

patible, and generally without any pains having been taken to understand that account itself. Yet as that account professes to be from one who was both the author and the witness of the phenomena in question, it might have been supposed that the aid of testimony would have been gladly brought to induction. An able work has been recently published on this subject by Mr. Granville Penn, who has at once reproved the bold philosophy which excludes the operation of God, and employs itself only among second causes ; and has unfolded the Mosaic account of two great revolutions of the earth, one of which took place when “the waters were gathered into one place,” and the other at the deluge, when “the fountains of the great deep were broken up,”* and has applied them to account for those phenomena which have been made to require a theory not to be reconciled with the sacred historian.†

Voltaire objected to the philosophy of the Mosaic account, that it has represented a solid firmament to have been formed, in which the stars are fixed as in a wall of adamant. This objection was made in ignorance of the import of the original word rendered *firmamentum* by the Vulgate, and which signifies an “expanse,” referring evidently to the atmosphere. The Septuagint seems to have rendered רקיע by στερεωμα, which signifies a “firm support,” with reference to the office of the atmosphere, to keep up, as effectually as by some solid support, the waters contained in the clouds. The account of Moses is philosophically true ; the expanded or diffused

* See note A, at the end of the chapter.

† A scientific Journal of great reputation, edited at the Royal Institution, has made an honourable disclaimer of those theories which contradict the Scriptures, and speaks in commendation of the work of Mr. Penn : “We are not inclined, even if we had time, to enter into the comparative merits of the fire and water fancies, miscalled theories ; but we have certain old-fashioned prejudices, which, in these enlightened days of scepticism and infidelity, will no doubt be set down as mightily ridiculous, but which, nevertheless, induce us to pause before we acquiesce either in the one or the other. There is another mode of accounting for the present state of the earth’s structure, on principles at least as rational, in a philosophical light, as either the Plutonian or Neptunian ; and inasmuch as it is more consistent with, and founded on, sacred history, incomparably superior. See Mr. Granville Penn’s Comparative Estimate of the Mineral and Mosaical Geologies.”

atmosphere “divides the waters from the waters,” the waters in the clouds from the waters of the earth and sea ; and the objection only shows ignorance of the original language, or inattention to it.

It is more difficult to explain that part of the Mosaic relation which represents light as created on the first day, and the sun not until the fourth : It would be wearisome to give the various solutions which have been offered. One of the most recent, that which supposes the creation of latent heat and light to be spoken of, cannot certainly be maintained ; for the light which on the first day obeyed the sublime fiat, was not latent but in a state of excitement, and collected itself into a body sufficient to produce the distinction between day and night, which, had it been either in a latent state, or every where diffused in an excited form, could not have been effected. The difficulty, however, so far from discrediting the Mosaic account, affords it a striking confirmation. Had it been compiled under popular notions, it never could have entered the mind of man, drawing all his philosophy from the optical appearances of nature only, that light, sufficient to form the distinction between day and night, should have been created independent of the sun ; and the conclusion, therefore, is, that the account was received either from inspiration, or from a tradition pure from its original fountain, and which had flowed on to the time of Moses, unmixed with popular corruptions.

“Sir William Herschel,” says Mr. Granville Penn, “has discovered, that the body of the sun is an opaque substance ; and that the splendid matter which dispenses to the world light and heat, is a luminous atmosphere * attached to its surface, figuratively, though not physically, as flame is attached to the wick of a lamp or a torch. So that the creation of the sun, as a part of ‘the host of heaven,’ does not necessarily imply the creation of light ; and, conversely, the creation of light does not necessarily imply the creation of the body of the sun. In the first creation of ‘the heaven and the earth,’

* Philosophical Transactions for 1795, p. 46 ; and 1801, p. 265.

therefore, not the planetary orbs only, but the solar orb itself, was created in darkness, awaiting the light, which, by one simple divine operation, was to be communicated at once to all. When, then, the almighty Word, in commanding light, commanded the first illumination of the solar atmosphere, its new light was immediately caught, and reflected throughout space, by all the members of the planetary system. And well may we imagine, that, in that first, sudden, and magnificent illumination of the universe, ‘the morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy.’”*

But if the discovery of Herschel be real, the passage just quoted supposes the solar orb to have been invested with its luminous atmosphere on the first day, and the difficulty in question still remains untouched; though it admirably explains how the heavens, that is, our solar system, should be created by one act, and yet that it should require a second fiat to invest them with light. Another way of meeting the difficulty is, that the lights which are said to have been made on the fourth day were not on that day actually created, but determined to certain uses. Thus Rosenmüller: “If any one, who is conversant with the genius of the Hebrew, and free from any previous bias of his judgment, will read the words of this article in their natural connexion, he will immediately perceive, that they import the direction or determination of the heavenly bodies to certain uses which they were to supply to the earth. The words יהי מארה, are not to be separated from the rest, or to be rendered *Fiant luminaria*, ‘Let there be lights;’ that is, ‘Let lights be made;’ but rather, ‘Let lights be;’ that is, ‘serve in the expanse of heaven,’—*inserviant in expanso calorum*,—‘for distinguishing between day and night; and let them be,’ or serve, ‘for signs,’ &c. For we are to observe, that the verb, היה, ‘to be,’ in construction with the prefix ל, ‘for,’ is generally employed to express the direction or determination of a thing to an end; and not the production of the thing: *e. g.*, Num. x. 31; Zech. viii. 19; and in many other places.”

* Job xxxviii. 7.

To this there is an obvious objection, that it does not assign any work, properly speaking, to the fourth day ; and how, when neither being was on that day given to them, nor any change effected in their qualities or relations, the lights could be determined to certain uses, except by giving information of their uses to men, cannot be conceived ; and as yet man was not created. Mr. Penn, indeed, supposes that the heavenly bodies had been hid from the earth till the fourth day by vapours ; that then they were for the first time dispelled, and, as he eloquently says, “ the amazing calendar of the heavens, ordained to serve for the notation of time in all human concerns, civil and religious, so long as time and man should continue, was therefore to be now first unfolded to the earth, with all the visible indices of time by which its measures were thereafter to be marked, distinguished, and computed ; and the splendid cause, which had hitherto issued its effect of light through an interposed medium, was to dispense that light to the earth immediately, in the full manifestation of its effulgence.”

The notion, that the earth was from the first to the fourth day enveloped with vapour, so that, as in a fog, the distinction of day and night was manifest, though the celestial orbs were not visible, is, however, assumed, and does not appear quite philosophical ; and though the dispersion of these vapours from the atmosphere assigns a work to the fourth day, it scarcely appears to be of sufficient importance to accord with the language of the history. It would be better to suppose, with others, that on the fourth day the annual motion of the earth commenced, which till then merely turned upon its axis, and with it the annual motion of the moon and planets in their orbits,—that wonderfully rapid and yet regular flight of the heavenly bodies which so awfully displays the power of the great Artificer in communicating, and constantly feeding, the mighty impulse, and which is so essential to the measurement of time, that without it the lights could not be, or serve “ for signs and for seasons,” and for solemn days, religious festivals, and the commemoration of important events, and for years. A sublime work is thus assigned to the fourth day, and the

difficulty seems mainly to be removed ; but whether some violence is not done to the letter of the account, may still be doubted ; and the difficulty which proves, as we have seen, if admitted in its full force, more for the Mosaic relation than against it, had better be retained, than one iota of the strict grammatical and contextual meaning of Scripture be suffered to pass away.

Several objections have been made at different times to the Mosaic account of the deluge. The fact, however, is not only preserved in the traditions of all nations, as we have already seen ; but, after all the philosophical arguments which were formerly urged against it, philosophy has at length acknowledged that the present surface of the earth must have been submerged under water. “Not only,” says Kirwan, “in every region of Europe, but also of both the old and new continents, immense quantities of marine shells, either dispersed or collected, have been discovered.” This and several other facts seem to prove, that at least a great part of the present earth was, before the last general convulsion to which it has been subjected, the bed of an ocean which, at that time, was withdrawn from it. Other facts seem also to prove with sufficient evidence, that this was not a gradual retirement of the waters which once covered the parts now inhabited by men ; but a violent one, such as may be supposed from the brief but emphatic relation of Moses. The violent action of water has left its traces in various undisputed phenomena. “Stratified mountains of various heights exist in different parts of Europe, and of both continents, in and between whose strata various substances of marine, and some vegetables of terrestrial, origin repose either in their natural state, or petrified.”* “To overspread the plains of the arctic circle with the shells of Indian seas, and with the bodies of elephants and rhinoceri, surrounded by masses of submarine vegetation ; to accumulate on a single spot, as at La Bolca, in promiscuous confusion, the marine productions of the four quarters of the globe ; what conceivable instrument would be efficacious but the rush of

* Kirwan's Geological Essays.

mighty waters ?” * These facts, about which there is no dispute, and which are acknowledged by the advocates of each of the prevailing geological theories, give a sufficient attestation to the deluge of Noah, in which “the fountains of the great deep were broken up,” and from which precisely such phenomena might be expected to follow. To this may be added, though less decisive in proof, yet certainly strong as presumptive evidence, that the very aspect of the earth’s surface exhibits interesting marks both of the violent action, and the rapid subsidence, of waters ; as well as affords a most interesting instance of the divine goodness in converting what was ruin itself, into utility and beauty. The great frame-work of the varied surface of the habitable earth was probably laid by a more powerful agency than that of water ; either when on the third day the waters under the heavens were gathered into one place, and the crust of the primitive earth was broken down to receive them, so that “the dry land might appear ;” or by those mighty convulsions which appear to have accompanied the general deluge : But the rounding, so to speak, of what was rugged, where the substance was yielding, and the graceful undulations of hill and dale which so frequently present themselves, were probably effected by the retiring waters. The flood has passed away ; but the soils which it deposited remain, and the valleys through which its last streams were drawn off to the ocean, with many an eddy and sinuous course, still exist, exhibiting visible proofs of its agency, and impressed with forms so adapted to the benefit of man, and often so gratifying to the finest taste, that, when the flood “turned,” it may be said to have “left a blessing behind it.”

Thus the objections once made to the fact of a general deluge have been greatly weakened by the progress of philosophical knowledge, and may, indeed, be regarded as nearly given up, like the former notion of the high antiquity of the race of men, founded on the Chinese and Egyptian chronologies and pretended histories. Philosophy has even at last found out that there is sufficient water in the ocean, if called

* Gisborne’s Testimony of Natural Theology, &c.

ferth, to overflow the highest mountains to the height given by Moses, a conclusion which it once stoutly denied. Keill formerly computed that twenty-eight oceans would be necessary for that purpose ; but we are now informed “that a farther progress in mathematical and physical knowledge has shown the different seas and oceans to contain at least forty-eight times more water than they were then supposed to do ; and that the mere raising of the temperature of the whole body of the ocean, to a degree no greater than marine animals live in, in the shallow seas between the tropics, would so expand it as more than to produce the height above the mountains stated in the Mosaic account.” As to the deluge of Noah, therefore, infidelity has almost entirely lost the aid of philosophy in framing objections to the Scriptures.

The dimensions of the ark, and the preservation of the animals contained in it, are, however, still the subject of occasional ridicule, though with little foundation. Dr. Hales proves the ark to have been of the burden of forty-two thousand four hundred and thirteen tons ; and asks, “Can we doubt of its being sufficient to contain eight persons, and about two hundred or two hundred and fifty pair of four-footed animals, (a number to which, according to M. Buffon, all the various distinct species may be reduced,) together with all the subsistence necessary for a twelve-month, with the fowls of the air, and such reptiles and insects as cannot live under water ?” “All these various animals were controlled by the power of God, whose special agency is supposed in the whole transaction, and ‘the lion was made to lie down with the kid.’”

Whether Noah was commanded to bring with him into the ark a pair of all living creatures, zoologically and numerically considered, has been doubted ; and as, during the long period between the creation and the flood, animals must have spread themselves over a great part of the antediluvian earth, and certain animals would, as now, probably become indigenous to certain climates, the pairs saved must, in such cases, have travelled from immense distances. Of such marches no intimation is given in the history ; and this seems to render it pro-

bable that the animals which Noah was to bring with him into the ark were the animals, clean and unclean, of the country in which he dwelt, and which, from the evident capacity of the ark, must have been in great variety and number. The terms used, it is true, are universal ; and it is satisfactory to know, that if the largest sense of them be taken, there was ample accommodation in the ark. Nevertheless, universal terms in Scripture are not always to be taken mathematically ; and in the vision of Peter, the phrase *παντα τα τετραποδα της γης*, “ all the four-footed beasts of the earth,” must be understood of *varii generis quadrupedes*, as Schleusner paraphrases it. In this case we may easily account for the exuviæ of animals whose species no longer exist, and which have been discovered in various places. The number of such extinct species probably has been greatly overrated by Cuvier ; but of the fact, to a considerable extent, there can be no doubt. It is also to be remarked, that we are not obliged to go to the limited interpretation of the command to Noah respecting the animals to be preserved in the ark, in order to account for this fact ; for, without adopting the totally unscriptural theory of a former world, or of more general revolutions of the earth than the Scriptures state, (partial ones, affecting large districts, may have taken place,) we know of no principle in the word of God which should lead us to conclude that all the animals which God at first created should be preserved to the end of time. In many countries whole species of wild animals have perished, by the progress of cultivation ; a process which must, ultimately, produce the utter extinction of the same species every where. The offices which many other creatures were designed to fulfil in the economy of nature may have terminated with the new circumstances in which the parts they have chiefly inhabited are placed. So it might be before the flood, and in many places since. Thus, then, the exuviæ of extinct species may be expected to present themselves. But, in addition to this, if we suppose that, during the antediluvian period, animals of various kinds had located themselves in different portions of the ocean, and in different climates of the primitive earth ; and that, of the terrestrial animals become

indigenous to parts of the earth distant from Noah and the inhabited world, some species were not received into the ark ; their remains will also occasionally be discovered, and present the proof of modes of animated existence not now to be paralleled. Among fossil remains it has been made a matter of surprise that no human skeletons, or but few, and those in recent formations, have been found. The reason, however, is not difficult to furnish. If we admit that the present continents were the bottom of the antediluvian ocean, and that the ocean has changed its place ; then the former habitations of men are submerged, and their remains are beyond human reach. If any part of the antediluvian earth still remains, it is probably that region to which Noah and his family were restored from the ark ; and in those countries geology has not commenced its interior researches, and such fossil remains may there exist. There is this difference between the human race and the inferior animals ; that whilst the latter, for near two thousand years, were roaming over the wide earth, the former confined themselves to one region ; for those extravagant calculations as to the population of the earth at the time of the flood which some have made, cannot be maintained on the authority of Scripture, on which they professedly rest ; since it is certain that they represent Noah as a preacher of righteousness to the whole existing world of men during the time the ark was preparing,—one hundred and twenty years. The human race must, therefore, have lived, however populous, in the same region, and been either in personal communication with him, or within the reach of the distinct report of his doctrines, and of that great and public act of his faith, the preparing of the ark, “ by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.” Even Cuvier gives it as a reason why human skeletons are not found in a fossil state, “ that the place which man then inhabited may have sunk into the abyss, and that the bones of that destroyed race may yet remain buried under the bottom of some actual seas.

SUCH are the leading evidences of the truth of the holy Scriptures, and of the religious system which they unfold, from the first promise made to the first fallen man, to its perfected exhibition in the New Testament. The Christian will review these solid and immovable foundations of his faith with unutterable joy. They leave none of his moral interests unprovided for in time ; they set before him a certain and a felicitous immortality. The sceptic and the infidel may be entreated, by every compassionate feeling, to a more serious consideration of the evidences of this divine system, and the difficulties and hopelessness of their own ; and they ought to be reminded, in the words of a modern writer, “if Christianity be true, it is tremendously true.” Let them turn to an insulted, but yet a merciful, Saviour, who even now prays for his blasphemers, in the words he once addressed to Heaven, in behalf of his murderers, “Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.”

NOTE A.—PAGE 349.

FROM the work referred to in the text, the following extracts will be read with interest :—

Mr. Penn first controverts the notion of those geologists who think that the earth was originally a fluid mass ; and as they plead the authority of Sir I. Newton, who is said to have concluded from its figure, (an obtuse spheroid,) that it was originally a yielding mass, Mr. Penn shows that this was only put hypothetically by him ; and that he has laid it down expressly as his belief, not that there was first a chaotic ocean, and then a gradual process of first formations ; but that “God at the beginning formed all material things of such figures and properties as most conduced to the end for which he formed them ;” and that he judged it to be unphilosophical to ascribe them to any mediate or secondary cause, such as laws of nature operating in a chaos. Mr. Penn then proceeds to show that, though what geologists call “first formations” may have the appearance of having been produced by a process, say of crystallization, or any other, that is no proof that they were not formed by the immediate act of God, as we are taught in the Scriptures ; and he confirms this by examples from the first formations in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and contends that the first formations of the mineral kingdom must come under the same rule. “If a bone of the first-created man

now remained, and were mingled with other bones pertaining to a generated race; and if it were to be submitted to the inspection and examination of an anatomist, what opinion and judgment would its sensible phenomena suggest, respecting the mode of its first formation? and what would be his conclusion? If he were unapprized of its true origin, his mind would see nothing in its sensible phenomena but the laws of ossification; just as the mineral geology 'sees nothing in the details of the formation of minerals, but precipitations, crystallizations, and dissolutions.'* He would, therefore, naturally pronounce of this bone, as of all the other bones, that its 'fibres were originally soft,' until, in the shelter of the maternal womb, it acquired 'the hardness of a cartilage, and then of bone;' that this effect 'was not produced at once, or in a very short time,' but 'by degrees;' that, after birth, it increased in hardness 'by the continual addition of ossifying matter, until it ceased to grow at all.'

"Physically true as this reasoning would appear, it would, nevertheless, be morally and really false. Why would it be false? Because it concluded, from mere sensible phenomena, to the certainty of a fact which could not be established by the evidence of sensible phenomena alone; namely, the mode of the first formation of the substance of created bone.

"Let us proceed from animal to vegetable matter; and let us consider the first created tree, under which the created man first reposed, and from which he gathered his first fruit. That tree must have had a stem, or trunk, through which the juices were conveyed from the root to the fruit, and by which it was able to sustain the branches upon which the fruit grew.

"If a portion of this created tree now remained, and if a section of its wood were to be mingled with other sections of propagated trees, and submitted to the inspection and examination of a naturalist; what opinion and judgment would its sensible phenomena suggest to him, respecting the mode of its first formation? and what would be his conclusion? If he were unapprized of its true origin, his mind would see nothing in its sensible phenomena, but the laws of lignification; just as the mineral geologist 'sees nothing in the details of the formations of primitive rock, but precipitations, crystallizations, and dissolutions.' He would, therefore, naturally pronounce of it, as of all the other sections of wood, that its 'fibres,' when they first issued from the seed, 'were soft and herbaceous;' that they 'did not suddenly pass to the hardness of perfect wood,' but 'after many years;' that the hardness of their folds, 'which indicate the growth of each year,' was, therefore, effected only 'by degrees;' and that, 'since Nature does nothing but by a progressive

* D'Aubuisson, i, pp. 326, 327.

course, it is not surprising that its substance acquired its hardness only by little and little.'

"Physically true as the naturalist would here appear to reason; yet his reasoning, like that of the anatomist, would be morally and really false. And why would it be false? For the same reason; because he concluded, from mere sensible phenomena, to the certainty of a fact which could not be established by the evidence of sensible phenomena alone; namely, the mode of the first formation of the substance of created wood.

"There only now remains to be considered, the third, or mineral, kingdom of this terrestrial system; and it appears probable, to reason and philosophy, by *primâ facie* evidence, that the principle determining the mode of first formations, in two parts of this threefold division of matter, must have equal authority in this third part. And, indeed, after the closest investigation of the subject, we can discover no ground whatever for supposing that this third part is exempted from the authority of that common principle; or that physics are a whit more competent to dogmatize concerning the mode of first formations, from the evidence of phenomena alone, in the mineral kingdom, than they have been found to be in the animal or vegetable; or to affirm, from the indications of the former, that the mode of its first formations was more gradual and tardy than those of the other two.

"Let us try this point, by proceeding with our comparison; and let us consider the first created rock, as we have considered the first created bone and wood; and let us ask, What is rock, in its nature and composition?

"To this question, mineralogy replies, 'By the word *rock* we mean, every mineral mass of such bulk as to be regarded an essential part of the structure of the globe.* We understand by the word *mineral*, a natural body, inorganic, solid, homogeneous, that is, composed of integrant molecules of the same substance.† We may, perhaps, pronounce that a mass is essential, when its displacement would occasion the downfall of other masses which are placed upon it.‡ Such are those lofty and ancient mountains, the first and most solid bones, as it were, of this globe,—*les premiers, les plus solides ossemens*,—which have merited the name of *primitive*, because, scorning all support and all foreign mixture, they repose always upon bases similar to themselves, and comprise within their substance no matter but of the same nature.§ These are the primordial mountains; which traverse our continents in various directions, rising

* D'Aubuisson, i., p. 272.

† Ibid., 271.

‡ Ibid., 272.

§ Saussure, *Voyages des Alpes, Disc. Prel.*, pp. 6, 7.

above the clouds, separating the basins of rivers one from another; serving, by means of their eternal snows, as reservoirs for feeding the springs, and forming, in some measure, the skeleton, or, as it were, the rough frame-work, of the earth.* These primitive masses are stamped with the character of a formation altogether crystalline, as if they were really the product of a tranquil precipitation.†

“ Had the mineral geology contented itself with this simple mineralogical statement, we should have thus argued concerning the crystalline phenomena of the first mineral formations, conformably to the principles which we have recognised : As the bone of the first man, and the wood of the first tree, whose solidity was essential for ‘giving shape, firmness, and support’ to their respective systems, were not, and could not have been, formed by the gradual processes of ossification and lignification, of which they, nevertheless, must have exhibited the sensible phenomena, or apparent indications ; so reason directs us to conclude, that primitive rock, whose solidity was equally essential for giving shape, firmness, and support to the mineral system of this globe, was not, and could not have been, formed by the gradual processes of precipitation and crystallization, notwithstanding any sensible phenomena, apparently indicative of those processes which it may exhibit ; but that in the mineral kingdom, as in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, the creating Agent anticipated in his formations, by an immediate act, effects, whose sensible phenomena could not determine the mode of their formation ; because the real mode was in direct contradiction to the apparent indications of the phenomena.

“ But the mineral geology has not contented itself with that simple mineralogical statement ; nor drawn the conclusion which we have drawn, in conformity with the principles, and in observance of the rules, of Newton’s philosophy. It affirms, ‘that the characters by which geology is written in the book of nature, in which it is to be studied, are minerals ;’‡ and it ‘sees nothing’ in that book of nature, but ‘precipitations, crystallizations, and dissolutions ;’ and, therefore, because it ‘sees nothing’ else, it concludes without hesitation, from crystalline phenomena to actual crystallization. Thus, by attempting the impossibility of deducing an universal principle, namely, the mode of first formations, from the analysis of a single individual, namely, mineral matter, separate from co-ordinate animal and vegetable matter ; and concluding from that defective analysis, to the general law of first formations ; it set out with inadequate light, and it is no wonder that it ended in absolute darkness ; for such is its elemental chaos and its chemical precipitation of this globe ; a

* Cuvier, sect. 7, p. 39.

† D’Aubuisson, ii., p. 5.

‡ D’Aubuisson, *Disc. Prel.*, p. 29.

doctrine so nearly resembling the exploded atomic philosophy of the Epicurean school, that it requires a very close and laborious inspection to discover a single feature by which they may be distinguished from each other."

This argument is largely supported and illustrated in the work ; and thus by referring first formations of every kind to an immediate act of God, those immense periods of time which geology demands for its chemical processes are rendered unnecessary. From first formations, Mr. Penn proceeds to oppose the notion that the earth has undergone many general revolutions, and thinks that all geological phenomena may be better explained by the Mosaic record, which confines those general revolutions to two. Mr. Penn's course of observation will be seen by the following recapitulation of the second and third parts of his work :—

" That this globe, so constructed at its origin, has undergone two, and only two, general changes or revolutions of its substance ; each of which was caused by the immediate will, intelligence, and power, of God exercised upon the work which he had formed, and directing the laws or agencies which he had ordained within it.

" That, by the first change or revolution, [that of gathering the waters into one place, and making the dry land appear,] one portion or division of the surface of the globe was suddenly and violently fractured and depressed, in order to form, in the first instance, a receptacle or bed for the waters universally diffused over that surface, and to expose the other portion, that it might become a dwelling for animal life ; and yet, with an ulterior design, that the receptacle of the waters should eventually become the chief theatre of animal existence, by the portion first exposed experiencing a similar fracture and depression, and thus becoming, in its turn, the receptacle of the same waters ; which should then be transfused into it, leaving their former receptacle void and dry.

" That this first revolution took place before the existence, that is, before the creation, of any organized beings.

" That the sea, collected into this vast fractured cavity of the globe's surface, continued to occupy it during 1656 years ; [from the creation to the deluge ;] during which long period of time, its waters acted in various modes, chemical and mechanical, upon the several soils and fragments which formed its bed ; and marine organic matter, animal and vegetable, was generated and accumulated in vast abundance.

" That, after the expiration of those 1656 years, it pleased God, in a second revolution, to execute his ulterior design, by repeating the amazing operation by which he had exposed the first earth ; and by the disruption and depression of that first earth below the level of the

bed of the first sea, to produce a new bed, into which the waters descended from their former bed, leaving it to become the theatre of the future generations of mankind.

“ That this present earth was that former bed.

“ That it must, therefore, necessarily exhibit manifest and universal evidences of the vicissitudes which it has undergone ; namely, of the vast apparent ruin occasioned by its first violent disruption and depression ; of the presence and operation of the marine fluid during the long interval which succeeded ; and of the action and effects of that fluid in its ultimate retreat.

“ Within the limits of this general scheme, all speculations must be confined which would aspire to the quality of sound geology ; yet vast and sublime is the field which it lays open, to exercise the intelligence and experience of sober and philosophical mineralogy and chemistry. Upon this legitimate ground, those many valuable writers who have unwarily lent their science to uphold and propagate the vicious doctrine of a chaotic geogony, may geologize with full security ; and may there concur to promote that true advancement of natural philosophy, which Newton holds to be inseparable from a proportionate advancement of the moral. They must thus at length succeed in perfecting a true philosophical geology ; which never can exist, unless the principle of Newton form the foundation, and the relation of Moses, the working-plan.”

PART SECOND.

DOCTRINES OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

CHAPTER I.

The Existence of God.

THE divine authority of those writings which are received by Christians, as a revelation of infallible truth, having been established, our next step is seriously, and with simplicity of mind, to examine their contents, and to collect from them that ample information on religious and moral subjects which they profess to contain, and in which it had become necessary that the world should be supernaturally instructed. Agreeably to a principle which has already been laid down, I shall endeavour, as in the case of any other record, to exhibit their meaning by the application of those plain rules of interpretation which have been established for such purposes by the common agreement of the sober part of mankind. All the assistance within reach from critics, commentators, and Divines, shall, however, be resorted to ; for, though the water can only be drawn pure from the sacred fountain itself, yet we owe it to many of these guides, that they have successfully directed us to the openings through which it breaks, and have led the way into the depth of the stream.

The doctrine which the first sentence in this divine revelation unfolds is, that there is a God, the Creator of heaven and earth ; and as this is fundamental to the whole scheme of duty, promise, and hope, which the books of Scripture successively unfold and explain, it demands our earliest consideration.

In three distinct ways do the sacred writers furnish us with information on this great and essential subject, the existence and the character of God ;—from the names by which he is designated ; from the actions ascribed to him ; and from the attributes with which he is invested in their invocations and praises, and in those lofty descriptions of his nature which, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have recorded for the instruction of the world. These attributes will be afterwards particularly considered ; but the impression of the general view of the divine character, as thus revealed, is too important to be omitted.

The names of God, as recorded in Scripture, convey at once ideas of overwhelming greatness and glory, mingled with that awful mysteriousness with which, to all finite minds, and especially to the minds of mortals, the divine essence and mode of existence must ever be invested. Though one, he is אלהים, *Elohim*, “Gods,” “persons adorable.” He is יהוה, *Jehovah*, “self-existing ;” אל, *El*, “strong,” “powerful ;” אהיה, *Ehieh*, “I am,” “I will be,” “self-existence,” “independency,” “all-sufficiency,” “immutability,” “eternity ;” שדי, *Shaddai*, “almighty,” “all-sufficient ;” אדון, *Adon*, “Supporter,” “Lord,” “Judge.” These are among the adorable appellatives of God which are scattered throughout the revelation that he has been pleased to make of himself : But on one occasion he was pleased more particularly to declare his name ; that is, such of the qualities and attributes of the divine nature as mortals are the most interested in knowing ; and to unfold, not only his natural, but those also of his moral attributes by which his conduct towards his creatures is regulated. “And the Lord passed by and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty ; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children’s children, unto the third and fourth generation.” (Exodus xxxiv.) This is the most ample and particular description of the character of God, as given by himself, in the sacred records ; and the import of the several

titles by which he has thus in his infinite condescension manifested himself, has been thus exhibited. He is not only *Jehovah*, “self-existent,” and *El*, “the strong or mighty God;” but “רחום, *Rochum*, ‘the merciful Being,’ who is full of tenderness and compassion. חנון, *Chanun*, ‘The gracious one,’ he whose nature is goodness itself,—the loving God. ארך אפים, *Erec Apayim*, ‘Longsuffering,’ the Being who, because of his tenderness, is not easily irritated, but suffers long, and is kind. רב, *Rab*, ‘The great or mighty one.’ חסד, *Chesed*, ‘The bountiful Being;’ he who is exuberant in his beneficence. אמת, *Emeth*, ‘The Truth or True One,’ he alone who can neither deceive nor be deceived. נצר חסד, *Notser Chesed*, ‘The Preserver of bountifulness,’ he whose beneficence never ends, keeping mercy for thousands of generations, showing compassion and mercy whilst the world endures. נושא עון ופשע וחטאה, *Nose ávon vapeshá vecha-taah*, ‘He who bears away iniquity, transgression, and sin;’ properly, the Redeemer, the Pardoner, the Forgiver, the Being whose prerogative it is to forgive sin, and save the soul. נקה לא ינקה, *Nakeh lo yinnakeh*, ‘The righteous Judge,’ who distributes justice with an impartial hand. And פקר עון, *Paked ávon*, &c., ‘He who visits iniquity,’ he who punishes transgressors, and from whose justice no sinner can escape; the God of retributive and vindictive justice.” *

The second means by which the Scriptures convey to us the knowledge of God, is by the actions which they ascribe to him. They contain, indeed, the important record of his dealings with men in every age which is comprehended within the limit of the sacred history; and, by prophetic declaration, they also exhibit the principles on which he will govern the world to the end of time: So that the whole course of the divine administration may be considered as exhibiting a singularly illustrative comment upon those attributes of his nature which, in their abstract form, are contained in such declarations as those which have been just quoted. The first act ascribed to God is that of creating the heavens and the earth out of

* Dr. A. Clarke, *in loc.*

nothing ; and by his fiat alone arranging their parts, and peopling them with living creatures. By this were manifested his eternity and self-existence, as he who creates must be before all creatures, and he who gives being to others can himself derive it from none ; his almighty power, shown both in the act of creation and in the number and vastness of the objects so produced ; his wisdom, in their arrangement, and in their fitness to their respective ends ; and his goodness, as the whole tended to the happiness of sentient beings. The foundations of his natural and moral government are also made manifest by his creative acts. In what he made out of nothing he had an absolute right and prerogative : It awaited his ordering, and was completely at his disposal ; so that to alter or destroy his own work, and to prescribe the laws by which the intelligent and rational part of his creatures should be governed, are rights which none can question. Thus on the one hand his character of Lord or Governor is established, and on the other our duty of lowly homage and absolute obedience.

Agreeably to this, as soon as man was created, he was placed under a rule of conduct. Obedience was to be followed with the continuance of the divine favour ; transgression, with death. The event called forth new manifestations of the character of God : His tender mercy, in the compassion showed to the fallen pair ; his justice, in forgiving them only in the view of a satisfaction to be hereafter offered to his justice by an innocent representative of the sinning race ; his love to that race, in giving his own Son, to become this Redeemer, and in the fulness of time to die for the sins of the whole world ; and his holiness, in connecting with this provision for the pardon of man the means of restoring him to a sinless state, and to the obliterated image of God in which he had been created. Exemplifications of the divine mercy are traced from age to age, in his establishing his own worship among men, and remitting the punishment of individual and national offences in answer to prayer offered from penitent hearts, and in dependence upon the typified or actually offered universal sacrifice :—Of his condescension, in stooping to the cases

of individuals ; in his dispensations both of providence and grace, by showing respect to the poor and humble ; and, principally, by the incarnation of God in the form of a servant, admitting men into familiar and friendly intercourse with himself, and then entering into heaven to be their Patron and Advocate, until they should be received unto the same glory, “and so be for ever with the Lord :”—Of his strictly righteous government, in the destruction of the old world, the cities of the plain, the nations of Canaan, and all ancient states, upon their “filling up the measure of their iniquities ;” and, to show that “he will by no means clear the guilty,” in the numerous and severe punishments inflicted even upon the chosen seed of Abraham, because of their transgressions :—Of his longsuffering, in frequent warnings, delays, and corrective judgments inflicted upon individuals and nations, before sentence of utter excision and destruction :—Of faithfulness and truth, in the fulfilment of promises, often many ages after they were given, as in the promises to Abraham respecting the possession of the land of Canaan by his seed, and in all the “promises made to the fathers” respecting the advent, vicarious death, and illustrious offices of the Christ, the Saviour of the world :—Of his immutability, in the constant and unchanging laws and principles of his government, which remain to this day precisely the same, in every thing universal, as when first promulgated, and have been the rule of his conduct in all places as well as through all time :—Of his prescience of future events, manifested by the predictions of Scripture :—And of the depth and stability of his counsel, as illustrated in that plan and purpose of bringing back a revolted world to obedience and felicity, which we find steadily kept in view in the scriptural history of the acts of God in former ages ; which is still the end towards which all his dispensations bend, however wide and mysterious their sweep ; and which they will finally accomplish, as we learn from the prophetic history of the future, contained in the Old and New Testaments.

Thus the course of divine operation in the world has, from age to age, been a manifestation of the divine character, con-

tinually receiving new and stronger illustrations until the completion of the Christian revelation by the ministry of Christ and his inspired followers ; and still placing itself in brighter light and more impressive aspects as the scheme of human redemption runs on to its consummation. From all the acts of God, as recorded in the Scriptures, we are taught that he alone is God ; that he is present everywhere to sustain and govern all things ; that his wisdom is infinite, his counsel settled, and his power irresistible ; that he is holy, just, and good ; the Lord and the Judge, but the Father and the Friend, of man.

More at large do we learn what God is from the declarations of the inspired writings.

As to his substance, that "God is a Spirit." As to his duration, that "from everlasting to everlasting he is God ;" "the King, eternal, immortal, invisible." That, after all the manifestations he has made of himself, he is, from the infinite perfection and glory of his nature, incomprehensible : "Lo, these are but parts of his ways, and how little a portion is heard of him !" "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him out." That he is unchangeable : "The Father of Lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." That "he is the fountain of life," and the only independent Being in the universe, "who only hath immortality." That every other being, however exalted, has its existence from him : "For by him were all things created which are in heaven and in earth, whether they are visible or invisible." That the existence of every thing is upheld by him, no creature being for a moment independent of his support : "By him all things consist ;" "upholding all things by the word of his power." That he is omnipresent : "Do not I fill heaven and earth with my presence ? saith the Lord." That he is omniscient : "All things are naked and open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do." That he is the absolute Lord and Owner of all things : "The heavens, even the heaven of heavens, are thine, and all the parts of them ;" "the earth is thine, and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein." "He doeth according to his will in

the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth." That his providence extends to the minutest objects: "The hairs of your head are all numbered." "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father." That he is a Being of unspotted purity, and perfect rectitude: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts!" "A God of truth, and in whom is no iniquity." "Of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." That he is just in the administration of his government: "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do right?" "Clouds and darkness are round about him; judgment and justice are the habitation of his throne." That his wisdom is unsearchable: "O the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" And, finally, that he is good and merciful: "Thou art good, and thy mercy endureth for ever." "His tender mercy is over all his works." "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."

Under these deeply awful, but consolatory, views, do the Scriptures present to us the supreme object of our worship and trust; and they dwell upon each of the above particulars with inimitable sublimity and beauty of language, and with an inexhaustible variety of illustration. Nor can we compare these views of the divine nature with the conceptions of the most enlightened of Pagans, without feeling how much reason we have for everlasting gratitude, that a revelation so explicit and so comprehensive should have been made to us on a subject which only a revelation from God himself could have made known. It is thus that Christian philosophers, even when they do not use the language of the Scriptures, are able to speak on this great and mysterious doctrine, in language so clear, and with conceptions so noble; in a manner, too, so equable, so different from the sages of antiquity, who, if at any time they approach the truth when speaking of the divine

nature, never fail to mingle with it some essentially erroneous or grovelling conception. "By the word God," says Dr. Barrow, "we mean a Being of infinite wisdom, goodness, and power, the Creator and the Governor of all things, to whom the great attributes of eternity and independency, omniscience and immensity, perfect holiness and purity, perfect justice and veracity, complete happiness, glorious majesty, and supreme right of dominion, belong ; and to whom the highest veneration and most profound submission and obedience are due."* "Our notion of Deity," says Bishop Pearson, "doth expressly signify a Being or nature of infinite perfection ; and the infinite perfection of a being or nature consists in this, that it be absolutely and essentially necessary ; an actual Being of itself ; and potential, or causative of all beings beside itself ; independent from any other ; upon which all things else depend, and by which all things else are governed."† "God is a Being, and not any kind of being ; but a substance which is the foundation of other beings ; and not only a substance, but perfect. Yet many beings are perfect in their kind, yet limited and finite. But God is absolutely, fully, and every way infinitely perfect ; and therefore above spirits, above angels, who are perfect comparatively. God's infinite perfection includes all the attributes, even the most excellent ; it excludes all dependency, borrowed existence, composition, corruption, mortality, contingency, ignorance, unrighteousness, weakness, misery, and all imperfections whatever ; it includes necessity of being, independency, perfect unity, simplicity, immensity, eternity, immortality, the most perfect life, knowledge, wisdom, integrity, power, glory, bliss, and all these in the highest degree. We cannot pierce into the secrets of this eternal Being. Our reason comprehends but little of him ; and when it can proceed no further, faith comes in, and we believe far more than we can understand : And this our belief is not contrary to reason ; but reason itself dictates unto us that we must believe far more of God than it can inform us of."‡ To these we may add an admirable passage from Sir

* Barrow on the Creed.

† Pearson on the Creed.

‡ Lawson's *Theo-Politica*.

Isaac Newton : “ The word ‘ God ’ frequently signifies, ‘ Lord , but every lord is not God ; it is the dominion of a spiritual Being or Lord that constitutes God ; true dominion, true God ; supreme, the supreme ; feigned, the false god. From such true dominion it follows that the true God is living, intelligent, and powerful ; and from his other perfections, that he is supreme, or supremely perfect ; he is eternal and infinite ; omnipotent and omniscient ; that is, he endures from eternity to eternity, and is present from infinity to infinity. He governs all things that exist, and knows all things that are to be known ; he is not eternity or infinity, but eternal and infinite ; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present ; he endures always, and is present everywhere ; he is omnipresent, not only virtually, but also substantially ; for power without substance cannot subsist. All things are contained and move in him, but without any mutual passion ; he suffers nothing from the motions of bodies ; nor do they undergo any resistance from his omnipresence. It is confessed that God exists necessarily, and by the same necessity he exists always and everywhere. Hence, also, he must be perfectly similar, all eye, all ear, all arm, all the power of perceiving, understanding, and acting ; but after a manner not at all corporeal, after a manner not like that of men, after a manner wholly to us unknown. He is destitute of all body, and all bodily shape, and therefore cannot be seen, heard, or touched ; nor ought he to be worshipped under the representation of any thing corporeal. We have ideas of the attributes of God, but do not know the substance of even any thing ; we see only the figures and colours of bodies, hear only sounds, touch only the outward surfaces, smell only odours, and taste tastes ; and do not, cannot, by any sense, or reflex act, know their inward substances ; and much less can we have any notion of the substance of God. We know him by his properties and attributes.”

It is observable that neither Moses, the first of the inspired penmen, nor any of the authors of the succeeding canonical books, enters into any proof of this first principle of religion, —that there is a God. They all assume it as a truth com-

monly known and admitted. There is, indeed, in the sacred volume, no allusion to the existence of atheistical sentiments till some ages after Moses ; and then it is not quite clear whether speculative or practical Atheism be spoken of. From this circumstance we learn that, previous to the time of Moses, the idea of one supreme and infinitely-perfect God was familiar to men ; that it had descended to them from the earliest ages ; and also that it was a truth of original revelation, and not one which the sages of preceding times had wrought out by rational investigation and deduction. Had that been the fact, we might have expected some intimation of it ; and if those views of God which are found in the Pentateuch were discovered by the successive investigations of wise men among the ancients, we might also have expected that the progress of this wonderful discovery would have been marked by Moses ; or if one only had demonstrated this truth by his personal researches, that some grateful mention of so great a sage, of so celebrated a moral teacher, would have been made. A truth, too, so essential to the whole Mosaic system, and upon which his own official authority rested, had it originated from successful human investigation, would seem naturally to have required a statement of the arguments by which it had been demonstrated, as a fit introduction to a book in which he professed to record revelations received from this newly-discovered Being, and to enforce laws uttered under his command. Nothing of this kind is attempted ; and the sacred historian and lawgiver proceeds at once to narrate the acts of God, and to declare his will. The history which he wrote, however, affords the reason why the introduction of formal proof of the existence of one true God was thought unnecessary. The first man, we are informed, knew God, not only from his works, but by sensible manifestation and converse ; the same divine appearances were made to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to Jacob ; and when Moses wrote, persons were still living who had conversed with those who conversed with God, or were descended from the same families to whom God, at sundry times, had appeared in visible glory, or in angelic forms. These divine manifestations were also matters of public

notoriety among the primitive families of mankind ; from them the tradition was transmitted to their descendants ; and the idea, once communicated, was confirmed by every natural object which they saw around them. It continued even after the introduction of idolatry ; and has never, except among the most ignorant of the Heathen, been, to this day, obliterated by polytheistic superstitions. It was thus that the knowledge of God was communicated to the ancient world. No discovery of this truth, either in the time of Moses, or in any former age, was made by human research ; neither the date nor the process of it could, therefore, be stated in his writings ; and it would have been trifling to moot a question which had been so fully determined, and to attempt to prove a doctrine universally received.

That the idea of a supreme First Cause was at first obtained by the exercise of reason, is thus contradicted by the facts that the first man received the knowledge of God by sensible converse with him, and that this doctrine was transmitted, with the confirmation of successive visible manifestations, to the early ancestors of all nations. Whether the discovery, therefore, of the simple truth of the existence of a First Cause be within the compass of human powers, is a point which cannot be determined by matter of fact ; because it may be proved that those nations by whom this doctrine has been acknowledged had their origin from a common stock, resident in that part of the world in which the primitive revelations were given. They were, therefore, never in circumstances in which such an experiment upon the power or weakness of the human mind could be made. Among some uncivilized tribes, such as the Hottentots of Africa, and the aborigines of New South Wales, the idea of a supreme Being is probably entirely obliterated ; some notions of spiritual existences superior in power to man, and possessed of creative and destructive powers, do, however, remain, naturally tending to that train of reflection which, in better-instructed minds, issues in the apprehension of one supreme and divine Intelligence. But no instance has been known of the knowledge of God having thus, or by any other means originating in themselves, been recovered : If restored

to them at all, it has been by the instruction of others ; and not by the rational investigation of even superior minds in their own tribes. Wherever there has been sufficient mental cultivation to call forth the exercise of the rational faculty in search of spiritual and moral truth, the idea of a First Cause has been previously known ; wherever that idea has been totally obliterated, the intellectual powers of man have not been in a state of exercise, and no curiosity as to such speculations has been awakened. Matter of fact does not, therefore, support the notion that the existence of God is discoverable by the unassisted faculties of man ; and there is, I conceive, very slender reason to admit the abstract probability.

A sufficient number of facts are obvious to the most cursory observation to show, that, without some degree of education, man is wholly the creature of appetite ; labour, feasting, and sleep divide his time, and wholly occupy his thoughts. If, therefore, we suppose a First Cause to be discoverable by human investigation, we must seek for the instances among a people whose civilization and intellectual culture have roused the mind from its torpor, and given it an interest in abstract and philosophic truth ; for to a people so circumstanced as never to have heard of God, the question of the existence of a First Cause must be one of mere philosophy. Religious motives, whether of hope or fear, have no influence where no religion exists ; and its very first principle is here supposed to be as yet undiscovered. Before, therefore, we can conceive the human mind to have reached a state of activity sufficiently energetic and curious even to commence such an inquiry, we must suppose a gradual progress from the uncivilized state, to a state of civil and scientific cultivation, and that without religion of any kind ; without moral control ; without principles of justice, except such as may have been slowly elaborated from those relations which concern the grosser interests of men, if even they be possible ; without conscience ; without hope or fear concerning another life. That no society of civilized men has ever been constituted under such circumstances, is what no one will deny. That it is possible to raise

a body of men into that degree of civil improvement which would excite the passion for philosophic investigation without the aid of religion, (which, in its lowest forms of superstition, admits, in a defective degree, what is implied in the existence of God,—a superior, creative, governing, and destroying power,) can have no proof, and is contradicted by every fact and analogy with which we are acquainted. Under the influence and control of religion all States, ancient and modern, have hitherto been formed and maintained; it has entered essentially into all their legislative and gubernative institutions; and Atheism is so obviously dissocializing, that even the philosophic Atheists of Greece and Rome confined it to their *esoteric* doctrine, and were equally zealous with others to maintain the public religion, as a restraint upon the multitude; without which, they clearly enough discerned, that human laws, and merely human motives, would be totally ineffectual to prevent that selfish gratification of the passions, the enmities, and the cupidity of men, which would break up every community into its original fragments, and arm every man against his fellow.

From this we may conclude that man without religion cannot exist in that state of civility and cultivation in which his intellectual powers are disposed to, or capable of, such a course of inquiry as might lead him to a knowledge of God; and that, as a mere barbarian, he would be wholly occupied with the gratification of his appetites or his sloth. Should we, however, suppose it possible that those who had no previous knowledge of God, or of superior invisible powers, might be brought to the habits of civil life, and be engaged in the pursuit of various knowledge, (which itself, however, is very incredible,) it would still remain a question whether, provided no idea from tradition or instruction had been suggested of the existence of spiritual superior beings, or of a supreme Creator or Ruler, such a truth would be within the reach of man, even in an imperfect form. We have already seen that a truth may appear exceedingly simple, important, and evident when once known, and, on this account, its demonstration may be considered easy, which, nevertheless, has been the result of

much previous research on the part of the discoverer.* The abundant rational evidence of the existence of God which may now be so easily collected, and which is so convincing, is, therefore, no proof that, without instruction from Heaven, the human mind would ever have made the discovery. "God is the only way to himself; he cannot in the least be come at, defined, or demonstrated by human reason; for where would the inquirer fix his beginning? He is to search for something he knows not what; a Nature without known properties; a Being without a name. It is impossible for such a person to declare or imagine what it is he would discourse of, or inquire into; a nature he has not the least apprehension of; a subject he has not the least glimpse of, in whole or in part; which he must separate from all doubt, inconsistencies, and errors; he must demonstrate without one known or sure principle to ground it upon; and draw certain necessary conclusions whereon to rest his judgment, without the least knowledge of one term or proposition to fix his procedure upon; and therefore can never know whether his conclusion be consequent or not consequent, truth or falsehood; which is just the same in science, as in architecture to raise a building without a foundation."†

"Suppose a person whose powers of argumentation are improved to the utmost pitch of human capacity, but who has received no idea of God by any revelation, whether from tradition, Scripture, or inspiration; how is he to convince himself that God is, and from whence is he to learn what God is? That of which as yet he knows nothing cannot be a subject of his thought, his reasonings, or his conversation. He can neither affirm nor deny till he know what is to be affirmed or denied. From whence, then, is our philosopher to divine, in the first instance, his idea of the infinite Being, concerning the reality of whose existence he is, in the second place, to decide?"‡

"Would a single individual, or even a single pair of the

* Vide part i., c. iv. † Ellis's Knowledge of Divine Things.

‡ Hare's Preservative against Socinianism

human race, or indeed several pairs of such beings as we are, if dropped from the hands of their Maker in the most genial soil and climate of this globe, without a single idea or notion engraved on their minds, ever think of instituting such an inquiry? or, short and simple as the process of investigation is, would they be able to conduct it, should it somehow occur to them? No man who has paid due attention to the means by which all our ideas of external objects are introduced into our minds through the medium of the senses, or to the still more refined process by which, reflecting on what passes in our minds themselves when we combine or analyze these ideas, we acquire the rudiments of all our knowledge of intellectual objects, will pretend that they would. The efforts of intellect necessary to discover an unknown truth are so much greater than those which may be sufficient to comprehend that truth, and feel the force of the evidence on which it rests, when fairly stated, that, for one man whose intellectual powers are equal to the former, ten thousand are only equal to the latter.”*

“Between matter and spirit, things visible and invisible, time and eternity, beings finite and beings infinite, objects of sense and objects of faith, the connexion is not perceptible to human observation. Though we push our researches therefore to the extreme point whither the light of nature can carry us, they will, in the end, be abruptly terminated, and we must stop short at an immeasurable distance between the creature and the Creator.”†

These observations have great weight; and though we allow, that the argument which proves that the effects with which we are surrounded must have been caused, and thus leads us up through a chain of subordinate causes to one First Cause, has in it a simplicity, an obviousness, and a force, which, when we are previously furnished with the idea of God, makes it at first sight difficult to conceive, that men, under any degree of cultivation, should be inadequate to it; yet, if the human mind ever commenced such an inquiry at all, it is

* Gleig's Stackhouse, Introd.

† Van Mildert's Discourses.

highly probable that it would rest in the notion of an eternal succession of causes and effects, rather than acquire the ideas of creation, in the proper sense, and of a supreme Creator. Scarcely any of the philosophers of the most inquisitive ages of Greece, or those of their followers at Rome, though with the advantage of traditions conveying the knowledge of God, seem to have been capable of conceiving of creation out of nothing,* and they consequently admitted the eternity of matter. This was equally the case with the theistical, the atheistical, and the polytheistical philosophers.† It was not among them a subject of dispute, but taken for a point settled and not to be contradicted, that matter was eternal, and could not therefore be created. Against this notion, since the revelation of truth to man, philosophy has been able to adduce a very satisfactory argument; but, though it is not a very recondite one, it was never discovered by philosophy whilst unaided by the Scriptures. In like manner philosophy can now furnish cogent arguments against an infinite succession of causes and effects; but it does not appear probable that they could have been apprehended by those to whom the very notion of a First Cause had not been intimated. If, however, it were conceded, that some glimmering of this great truth might, by induction, have been discovered by contemplative minds thus circumstanced, by what means could they have demonstrated to themselves that that great collection of bodies which we call “the world” had but one Creator; that he is an incorporeal Spirit; that he is eternal, self-existent, immortal, and independent? Certain it is, that the argument *à posteriori* does not of itself fully confirm all these conclusions; and the argument *à priori*, when directed to these mysterious points, is not, with all the advantages which we

* Vide part i., c. 4.

† “Few, if any, of the ancient pagan philosophers acknowledged God to be in the most proper sense, the Creator of the world. By calling him *Δημιουργος*, ‘the Maker of the world,’ they did not mean that he brought it out of non-existence into being; but only that he built it out of pre-existent materials, and disposed it into a regular form and order.”—See ample proofs and illustrations in c. 13, part i. of Leland’s *Necessity of Revelation*.

enjoy, so satisfactory as to leave no rational ground of doubt as to its conclusiveness. No sober man, we apprehend, would be content with that as the only foundation of his faith and hope. If, indeed, the idea of God were innate, as some have contended, the question would be set at rest. But then every human being would be in possession of it. Of this there is not only no proof at all, but the evidence of fact is against it; and the doctrine of innate ideas may with confidence be pronounced a mere theory, assumed to support favourite notions, but contradicted by all experience. We are all conscious that we gain the knowledge of God by instruction; and we observe, that, in proportion to the want of instruction, men are ignorant, as of other things, so of God. Peter, the wild boy, who in the beginning of the last century was found in a wood in Germany, far from having any innate sense of God or religion, seemed to be incapable of instruction; and the aboriginal inhabitants of New-Holland are found, to this day, in a state of knowledge but little superior, and certainly have no idea of the existence of one supreme Creator.

It is therefore to be concluded, that we owe the knowledge of the existence of God, and of his attributes, to revelation alone; but, being now discovered, the rational evidence of both is copious and irresistible; * so much so, that Atheism has never been able to make much progress among mankind where this revelation has been preserved. It is resisted by demonstrations too numerous, obvious, and convincing; and is itself too easily proved to involve the most revolting absurdities.

No subject has employed the thoughts and pens of the most profound thinkers more than the demonstration of the being and attributes of God; and the evidence from fact, reason,

* "Tell men there is a God, and their mind embraces it as a necessary truth; unfold his attributes, and they will see the explanation of them in his works. When the foundation is laid sure and firm that there is a God, and his will the cause of all things, and nothing made but by his special appointment and command, then the order of beings will fill their minds with a due sense of the divine Majesty, and they may be made a scale to raise juster conceptions of what is immortal and invisible."—ELLIS'S *Knowledge of Divine Things*.

and the nature of things, which has been collected, is large and instructive. These researches have not, however, brought to light any new attribute of God, not found in Scripture. This is a strong presumption that the only source of our notions on this subject is the manifestation which God has been pleased to make of himself, and a confirmation that human reason, if left to itself, would never have made the slightest discovery respecting the divine nature. But as to what is revealed, they are of great importance in the controversy with polytheism, and with that still more unnatural and monstrous perversion, the philosophy which denies a God.

Demonstrations both *à priori* and *à posteriori*, the former beginning with the cause, the latter with the effect, have been attempted, not only of the being, but also of all the attributes ascribed to God in the holy Scriptures. On each we shall offer some observations and illustrations, taking the argument *à posteriori* first, both because, as to the simple question of the being of a God, it is the only satisfactory and convincing proof; and, especially, because it is that only to which the Scriptures themselves refer us. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." "For by the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionably the Maker of them is seen."

Nature, as one justly observes, proceeds from causes to effects; but the most certain and successful investigations of man proceed from effects to causes, and this is the character of what logicians have called the argument *à posteriori*.

In philosophy it has been laid down as an axiom, "that no event or change comes to pass merely of itself; but that every change stands related to, and implies the existence and influence of, something else, in consequence of which such change comes to pass, and which may be regarded as the principle, beginning, or source of the change referred to it." Accordingly, the term "cause" is usually employed to denote the supposed principle of change; and the term "effect" is

applied to the change considered in relation to the principle of change whence it proceeded. This axiom or principle is usually thus expressed: "For every effect there must be a cause." "Nothing exists, or comes to pass, without a cause." *Nihil turpius philosopho quam fieri sine causâ quicquam dicere.*

Rooted as this principle is in the common sense and in the common observation and experience of mankind, it is assailed in the metaphysical Atheism of Hume, who appears to have borrowed his argument from the no less sceptical Hobbes; and the relation of cause and effect has, in consequence, been the subject of considerable controversy.

Causes have been distributed by logicians into efficient, material, final, and formal. Efficient causes are the agents that produce certain effects; material causes are the subjects on which the agent performs his operation; or those contingent natures which lie within the reach of the agent to influence. Final causes are the motives or purposes which move to action, or the end for which any thing is done. Formal causes denote the changes resulting from the operation of the agent; or that which determines a thing to be what it is, and distinguishes it from every thing else.

It is with efficient causes, as understood in the above distribution, that we are principally concerned. Mr. Hume and his followers have laid it down, that there is no instance in which we are able to perceive a necessary connexion between two successive events; or to comprehend in what manner the one proceeds from the other, as its cause. From experience, they observe, indeed we learn, that there are many events, which are constantly conjoined, so that the one invariably follows the other; but it is possible, for any thing we know to the contrary, that this connexion, though a constant one, as far as our observation has reached, may not be a necessary connexion; nay, it is possible, that there may be no necessary connexions among any of the phenomena we see, and if there be any such connexions existing, we may rest assured that we shall never be able to discover them. This doctrine has, however, been admitted by many who not only deny the sceptical

conclusions which Hobbes and Hume deduced from it, but who contend that it leads to a directly contrary conclusion. "The fallacy of this part of Mr. Hume's system," says Professor Stewart, "does not consist in his premises, but in the conclusion which he draws from them. The word 'cause' is used, both by philosophers and the vulgar, in two senses, which are widely different. When it is said, that every change in nature indicates the operation of a cause, the word 'cause' expresses something which is supposed to be necessarily connected with the change, and without which it could not have happened. This may be called the metaphysical meaning of the word; and such causes may be called metaphysical or efficient causes. In natural philosophy, however, when we speak of one thing being the cause of another, all that we mean is, that the two are constantly conjoined; so that when we see the one, we may expect the other. These conjunctions we learn from experience alone; and without an acquaintance with them, we could not accommodate our conduct to the established course of nature. The causes which are the objects of our investigation in natural philosophy may, for the sake of distinction, be called physical causes."* By this distinction and concession all that is sceptical and atheistic in Hume's doctrine is indeed completely refuted; for if metaphysical or efficient causes be allowed, and also that "power, force, energy, and causation, are to be regarded as attributes of mind, and can exist in mind only,"† it is of little consequence to the argument as to the existence of a supreme First Cause, whether the constant succession of events among physical causes has a necessary connexion or not; or, in other words, whether what is purely material can have the attribute of causation. The writer we have just quoted thinks that this doctrine is "more favourable to Theism, than even the common notions upon this subject;" "if at the same time we admit the authority of that principle of the mind which leads us to refer every change to an efficient cause;" "as it keeps the Deity always in view, not only as the first, but as the constantly operating

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

† Ibid.

efficient cause in nature, and as the great connecting principle among all the various phenomena which we observe.”* This author still further thinks that Mr. Hume has undesignedly furnished an antidote by this error to Spinozism itself. “Mr. Hume’s doctrine, in the unqualified form in which he states it, may lead to other consequences not less dangerous; but if he had not the good fortune to conduct metaphysicians to the truth, he may at least be allowed the merit of having shut up for ever one of the most frequented and fatal paths which lead them astray,”—“the cardinal principle on which the whole system of Spinoza turns being, that all events, physical and moral, are necessarily linked together as causes and effects.”†

When the doctrine is thus restricted to physical causes, its dangerous tendency is greatly weakened, if not altogether neutralized; yet, notwithstanding the authority with which it has been supported, it may be suspected that it is radically unsound, and that it leads to consequences very contradictory to the experience of mankind, or, at best, that it is rather a philosophical paradox, or quibble, than a philosophic discovery. What are called above “metaphysical or efficient causes” are admitted, with respect to mind, of which “power, force, energy, and causation, are attributes.” “One kind of cause, namely, what a man, or any other living being, is to his own voluntary actions, or to those changes which he produces directly in himself, and indirectly in himself, by the occasional exertion of his own power,” says Dr. Gregory,‡ “may be called for distinction’s sake ‘an agent.’ That there are such agents, and that many events are to be referred to them, as either wholly or partly their causes or principles of change, is not only certain but even self-evident.” We are all conscious of power to produce certain effects; and we are sure that there is between this cause and the effect produced, more than a mere relation of antecedence, and sequence, for we are conscious not only of designing to produce the effect, but of the

* Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.

† Dissertation prefixed to the Supplement of the Encyclo. Britannica.

‡ Literary and Philosophical Essays.

exertion of power, though we do not always know the medium by which the power acts upon the object, as when we move the hand or the foot voluntarily, nor the mode in which the exerted energy connects itself with the result. Yet the result follows the will; and however often this is repeated, it is still the same. The relations between physical causes and effects must be different from this; but if, according to the doctrine of Hume, it were only a relation of succession, the following absurdities, as stated by Dr. Reid,* would inevitably follow: "Night would be the cause of day, and day the cause of night; for no two things have more constantly followed each other since the beginning of the world. Any thing, for what we know, may be the cause of any thing, since nothing is essential to a cause but its being constantly followed by the effect: What is unintelligent may be the cause of what is intelligent; folly may be the cause of wisdom, and evil of good; and thus all reasoning from the effect to the nature of the cause, and all reasoning from final causes, must be given up as fallacious." Physical causes—as, for example, what impulse is to motion, heat to expansion, fusion, and evaporation; the earth to the fall of a stone towards it; the sun and moon to the tides—express a relation different from that between man and any of his voluntary actions; but it cannot be the same as the relation of priority and succession among things or events. Men have been mistaken, in some cases, in taking the circumstances of the succession of one event to another as a proof of their relation as cause and effect; but even this shows that, in the fixed opinion of mankind, constant succession, when there is an appearance of the dependence of one thing upon another, implies more than mere succession, and that what is considered as the cause has an efficiency either from itself, or by derivation, by which the effect is brought to pass. It is truly observed by Dr. Browne,† "We find by observation and experience that such and such effects are produced; but when we attempt to think of the reason why, and the manner how, the causes work those

* Reid's Essays.

† Procedure, &c., of the Human Understanding.

effects, then we are at a stand, and all our reasoning is precarious, or at best but probable conjecture." From hence, however, it would be a ridiculous conclusion, that, because we are ignorant of the manner in which physical causes act, they do not act at all; or that none such exist, in the ordinarily received sense; that is, that the effect is not dependent upon what is called "the cause," and that the presence of the latter, according to the established laws of nature, is not necessary to the effect, so that without it the effect would not follow. The efficient cause may be latent, but the physical cause is that through which it operates, and must be supposed to have an adaptation to convey the power, so to speak, in some precise mode, by mechanical or other means, to the result, or there could neither be ingenuity and contrivance in the works of art, nor wisdom in the creation. A watch might indicate the hour without wheels, and a clod might give as copious a light to the planetary system as the sun. If the doctrine of Hume denies efficient causes, it contradicts all consciousness and the experience founded upon it; if it applies only to physical causes, it either confounds them with efficient causes, or says, in paradoxical language, only what has been better said by others, and that without any danger of involving either absurd or dangerous consequences. "When an event is produced according to a known law of nature, the law of nature is called the cause of that event. But a law of nature is not the efficient cause of any event; it is only the rule according to which the efficient cause acts. A law is a thing conceived in the mind of a rational being, not a thing which has a real existence; and therefore, like a motive, it can neither act nor be acted upon, and, consequently, cannot be an efficient cause. If there be no being that acts according to that law, it produces no effect."* "All things that are done in the world are done immediately by God himself, or by created intelligent beings; matter being evidently not at all capable of any laws or powers whatever, any more than it is capable of intelligence; excepting only this one negative power, that every

* Reid's Essays.

part of it will, of itself, always and necessarily continue in that state, whether of rest or motion, wherein it at present is. So that all those things which we commonly say are the effects of the natural powers of matter and laws of motion, of gravitation, attraction, or the like, are indeed (if we will speak strictly and properly) the effects of God's acting upon matter continually, and every moment, either immediately by himself, or mediately by some created intelligent beings. Consequently, there is no such thing as what men commonly call 'the course of nature,' or 'the powers of nature.' 'The course of nature,' truly and properly speaking, is nothing else but the will of God producing certain effects in a continued, regular, constant, and uniform manner."*

The true state of the case appears to be, 1. That there are efficient causes, and that the relation between them and their effects is necessary, since, without the operation of the efficient, the effect would not take place. This we find in ourselves, and we proceed therefore upon the surest ground when we ascribe effects which are above human power, to a causation which is more than human, and, in the case of the phenomena of universal nature, to a divine cause, or, in other words, to God. 2. That there are physical causes, between which and their effects there is a relation or connexion very different from that of a mere order of succession, which in fact is a relation that entirely excludes the idea of causation in any sense. According to the present established order of nature, this also may be termed a necessary connexion, although not necessary in the sense of its being the only method by which the infinite and first efficient could produce the effect. His resources are doubtless boundless; but having established a certain order in nature, or, in other words, having given certain powers and properties to matter, with reference to a mutual operation of different bodies upon each other, his supreme efficiency, his causing power, takes its direction and displays itself in this order, and is modified by the pre-established and constantly upheld properties through and by

which it operates. So far, and in this sense, the relation between physical causes and effects is a necessary one ; and the doctrine of final causes is thus established by those wondrous arrangements and adaptations in the different parts of nature, and in individual bodies, which carry on and conduct the ever-acting efficiency of God to those wise and benevolent ends that he has proposed. Thus the sun, by virtue of a previously-established adaptation between its own qualities, the earth's atmosphere, and the human eye, is the necessary cause of light and vision, though the true efficient be the Creator himself, ever present to his own arrangements ; as the spring of a watch is the necessary cause of the motion of the wheels and indices, though the efficient, in the proper sense, is the artist himself who framed the whole. In these cases there is, however, this difference to be observed, though it affects not the argument of a secondary physical causation,—that the maker of a watch, finding certain bodies endued with certain primary properties, may array them one against the other, and so leave his work to go on without his constant impulse and interposition ; but, in nature, the primary properties of matter, and its existence itself, are derived and dependent, and need the constant upholding of Him who spake them out of nothing, and by whom they all consist.

The relation of cause and effect, according to the common sense and observation of mankind, being thus established,* we proceed to the arguments which are founded upon it.

* “The language of every nation is formed on the connexion between cause and effect ; for in every language there are not only many words directly expressing ideas of this subject, such as ‘cause,’ ‘efficiency,’ ‘effect,’ ‘production,’ ‘produce,’ ‘effectuate,’ ‘create,’ ‘generate,’ &c., or words equivalent to these ; but every verb in every language, except the intransitive impersonal verbs, and the verb substantive, involves of course causation or efficiency, and refers always to an agent or cause in such a manner, that, without the operation of this cause or agent, the verb would have no meaning. All mankind, except a few atheistical and sceptical philosophers, have thus agreed in acknowledging this connexion ; and they have acknowledged it as fully as others, in their customary language : They have spoken exactly as other men speak ; and the connexion between cause and effect is as often declared in their conversation and writings, and as much relied on, as in those of other men.”—DWIGHT'S *Theology*, vol. i., p. 5.

The existence of God, once communicated to us by his own revelation, direct or traditional, is capable of ample proof, and receives an irresistible corroborative evidence *à posteriori*.

An argument *à priori* is an argument from something antecedent to something consequent ; from principle to corollary ; from cause to effect. An argument *à posteriori*, on the contrary, is an argument from consequent to antecedent, from effect to cause. Both these kinds of proof have been resorted to in support of the doctrine of the existence of God ; but it is on the latter only that any dependence can be placed, and the demonstration is too strong to need a doubtful auxiliary.

The first argument, *à posteriori*, for the existence of a God, is drawn from our own actual existence, and that of other beings around us. This, by an obvious error, has sometimes been called an argument *à priori* ; but if our existence is made use of to prove the existence of a supreme Creator, it is unquestionably an argument which proceeds from consequent to antecedent, from effect to cause. This ancient and obvious demonstration has been placed in different views by different writers. Locke has, in substance, thus stated it : Every man knows with absolute certainty, that he himself exists. He knows, also, that he did not always exist, but began to be. It is clearly certain to him that his existence was caused, and not fortuitous ; and was produced by a cause adequate to the production. By an adequate cause is invariably intended a cause possessing and exerting an efficacy sufficient to bring an effect to pass. In the present case, an adequate cause is one possessing and exerting all the understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, such a being as the man in question. This Cause is what we are accustomed to call "God." The understanding necessary to contrive, and the power necessary to create, a being compounded of the human soul and body, admit of no limits. He who can contrive and create such a being can contrive and create any thing. He who actually contrived and created man certainly contrived and created all things.

The same argument is given more copiously, but with great clearness, by Mr. Howe :—

“ We therefore begin with God’s existence ; for the evincing of which we may be most assured, first, that there hath been somewhat or other from all eternity ; or that, looking backward, somewhat of real being must be confessed eternal. Let such as have not been used to think of any thing more than what they could see with their eyes, and to whom reasoning only seems difficult because they have not tried what they can do in it, but use their thoughts a little, and by moving them a few easy steps, they will soon find themselves as sure of this as that they see, or hear, or understand, or are any thing.

“ For being sure that something now is, (that you see, for instance, or are something,) you must then acknowledge that certainly something always was, and hath ever been, or been from all eternity ; or else you must say that, some time, nothing was ; or that all being once was not. And so, since you find that something now is, there was a time when all being did begin to be ; that is, that till that time there was nothing ; but now, at that time, something first began to be. For what can be plainer than that, if all being some time was not, and now some being is, every thing of being had a beginning ? And thence it would follow that some being, that is, the first that ever began to be, did of itself start up out of nothing, or made itself to be when before nothing was.

“ But now, do you not plainly see that it is altogether impossible any thing should do so ; that is, when it was as yet nothing, and when nothing at all as yet was, that it should make itself, or come into being of itself ? For, surely, making itself is doing something. But can that which is nothing do any thing ? Unto all doing there must be some doer. Wherefore a thing must be before it can do any thing ; and therefore it would follow, that it was before it was ; or was and was not ; was something and nothing at the same time. Yea, and that it was diverse from itself ; for a cause must be a distinct thing from that which is caused by it. Wherefore it is most apparent that some being hath ever been, or did never begin to be.

“ Whence, further, it is also evident, secondly, that some being was uncaused, or was ever of itself without any cause. For what never was from another had never any cause ; since nothing could be its own cause. And somewhat, as appears from what hath been said, never was from another. Or it may be plainly argued thus ; that either some being was uncaused, or all being was caused. But if all being was caused, then some one at least was the cause of itself ; which hath been already shown impossible. Therefore the expression commonly used concerning the first being, that ‘ it was of itself,’ is only to be taken negatively, that is, that it was not of another ; not positively, as if it did some time make itself. Or what there is positive signified by that form of speech is only to be taken thus,—that it was a being of that nature as that it was impossible it should ever not have been ; not that it did ever of itself step out of not being into being.

“ And now it is hence further evident, thirdly, that some being is independent upon any other ; that is, whereas it already appears that some being did never depend on any other as a productive cause, and was not beholden to any other that it might come into being ; it is thereupon equally evident that it is simply independent, or cannot be beholden to any for its continued being ; for what did never need a productive cause doth as little need a sustaining or conserving cause. And, to make this more plain, either some being is independent, or all being is dependent. But there is nothing without the compass of all being whereon it may depend. Wherefore, to say that all being doth depend, is to say it depends on nothing, that is, that it depends not ; for to depend on nothing is not to depend. It is, therefore, a manifest contradiction to say that all being doth depend ; against which it is no relief to urge that all beings do circularly depend on one another.* For so, however the whole circle.

* The notion of an infinite series of caused and successive beings is absurd ; for of this infinite series, either some one part has not been successive to any other, or else all the several parts of it have been successive. If some one part of it was not successive, then it had a first part, which destroys the supposition of its infinity. If all the several parts of it have been successive,

or sphere of being should depend on nothing, or one at last depend on itself,—which, negatively taken, as before, is true, and the thing we contend for,—that one, the common support of all the rest, depends not on any thing without itself.

“Whence also it is plainly consequent, fourthly, that such a being is necessary or doth necessarily exist; that is, that it is of such a nature as that it could not or cannot but be. For what is in being, neither by its own choice, nor any other’s, is necessarily. But what was not made by itself, (which hath been shown to be impossible,) nor by any other, (as it hath been proved something was not,) it is manifest, it neither depended on its choice, nor any other’s, that it is. And therefore its existence is not owing to choice at all, but to the necessity of its own nature. Wherefore it is always by a simple, absolute, natural necessity; being of a nature to which it is altogether repugnant and impossible ever not to have been, or ever to cease from being. And now having gone thus far, and being assured, that hitherto we feel the ground firm under us; that is, having gained a full certainty that there is an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, and therefore actually and everlastingly existing; we may advance one step further,

“And with equal assurance add, fifthly, that this eternal, independent, uncaused, necessary Being is self-active; that is, (which is at present meant,) not such as acts upon itself, but that which hath the power of acting upon other things, in and of itself, without deriving it from any other: Or at least that there is such a Being as is eternal, uncaused, &c., having

then have they all once been future: But if they have all been future, a time may be conceived when none of them had existence; and if so, then it follows either that all the parts, and consequently the whole of this infinite series, must have arisen from nothing, which is absurd; or else, that there must be something in the whole, besides what it contained in all the parts, which is also absurd. See Clarke’s Demonstration, and Wollaston’s Religion of Nature. “A chain,” says Dr. Paley, “composed of an infinite number of links can no more support itself than a chain composed of a finite number of links. If we increase the number of links from ten to a hundred, and from a hundred to a thousand, &c., we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency, towards self-support.”

the power of action in and of itself. For either such a Being, as hath been already evinced, is of itself active or unactive, or hath the power of action of itself or not. If we will say the latter, let it be considered what we say, and to what purpose we say it.

“1. We are to weigh what it is we affirm, when we speak of an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, which is of itself totally unactive, or destitute of any active power. If we will say there is some such thing, we will confess, when we have called it something, it is a very silly, despicable, idle something, and a something (if we look upon it alone) as good as nothing. For there is but little odds between being nothing, and being able to do nothing. We will again confess, eternity, self-origination, independency, necessity of existence, to be very great and highly dignifying attributes; and import a most inconceivable excellency. For what higher glory can we ascribe to any being, than to acknowledge it to have been from eternity of itself, without being beholden to any other, and to be such as that it can be and cannot but be in the same state, self-subsisting and self-sufficient, to all eternity? But can our reason either direct or endure, that we should so incongruously misplace so magnificent attributes as these, and ascribe the prime glory of the most excellent Being unto that which is next to nothing? But if any in the mean time will be so inconsiderate as to say this, let it,

“2. Be considered to what purpose they say it. Is it to exclude a necessary, self-active Being? But it can signify nothing to that purpose. For such a Being they will be forced to acknowledge, let them do what they can (besides putting out their own eyes) notwithstanding. For why do they acknowledge any necessary being at all, that was ever of itself? Is it not because they cannot, otherwise, for their hearts, tell how it was ever possible that any thing at all could come into being? But, finding that something is, they are compelled to acknowledge that something hath ever been, necessarily and of itself.* No other account could be given

* “We will acknowledge an impropriety in this word, and its conjugate, self-originate,” sometimes hereafter used: Which yet is recompensed by their

how other things came to be. But what ! doth it signify any thing towards the giving an account of the original of all other things, to suppose only an eternal, self-subsisting, unactive being ? Did that cause other things to be ? Will not their own breath choke them if they attempt to utter the self-contradicting words, ‘an unactive cause, which is efficient or the author of any thing ?’ And do they not see they are as far from their mark, or do no more towards the assigning an original to all other things, by supposing an eternal, unactive being only, than if they supposed none at all ? That which can do nothing can no more be the productive cause of another, than that which is nothing. Wherefore, by the same reason that hath constrained us to acknowledge an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, we are also unavoidably led to acknowledge this Being to be self-active, or such as hath the power of action in and of itself ; or that there is certainly such a Being, who is the cause of all the things which our senses tell us are existent in the world.

“For what else is left us to say or think ? Will we think fit to say, that all things we behold were, as they now are, necessarily existent from all eternity ? That were to speak against our own eyes, which continually behold the rise and fall of living things, of whatsoever sort or kind, that can come under their notice. For all the things we behold are in some respect or other, internally or externally, continually changing, and therefore could never long be beheld as they are. And to say, then, they have been continually changing from eternity, and yet have been necessarily, is unintelligible and flat nonsense. For what is necessarily, is always the same ; and what is in this or that posture necessarily, (that is, by an intrinsic, simple, and absolute necessity, which must be here meant,) must be ever so. Wherefore, to suppose the world

conveniency ; as they may perhaps find who shall make trial how to express the sense intended by them in other words. And they are used without suspicion, that it can be thought they are meant to signify as if God ever gave original to himself ; but in the negative sense, that he never received it from any other ; yea, and that he is what is more than equivalent to his being self-caused, namely, a Being of himself so excellent as not to need or be capable to admit any cause.”

in this or that state necessarily, and yet that such a state is changeable, is an impossible and self-contradicting supposition.

“But now, since we find that the present state of things is changeable, and actually changing, and that what is changeable is not necessarily, and of itself; and since it is evident that there is some necessary being, otherwise nothing could ever have been; and that without action nothing could be free from it, since also all change imports somewhat of passion, and all passion supposes action; and all action, active power; and active power, an original seat or subject, which is self-active, or hath the power of action in and of itself; (for there could be no derivation of it from that which hath it not, and no first derivation but from that which hath it originally of itself; and a first derivation there must be, since all things that are, or ever have been, furnished with it, and not of themselves, must either immediately or mediately have derived it from that which had it of itself;) it is therefore manifest, that there is a necessary, self-active Being, the Cause and Author of this perpetually variable state and frame of things.

“And hence, since we can frame no notion of life which self-active power doth not, at least, comprehend, (as, upon trial, we shall find that we cannot,) it is consequent, sixthly, that this Being is also originally vital, and the root of all vitality, such as hath life in or of itself, and from whence it is propagated to every other living thing.”*

The self-existent, eternal, self-active, and vital Being, whose necessary existence has thus been proved, is also intelligent; of which the demonstration *à posteriori* is large and convincing. For since we are speaking of a Being who is himself independent, and upon whom all things depend; and from the dependence of every thing we see around us, we necessarily infer a cause of them, whom we do not see, but who must himself be independent, and from whom they must have originated; their actual existence, and their being upheld and sustained, prove his power; and their arrangement, and

wise and evidently intentional disposition, prove also his intelligence.

In the proposition that the self-existent and original cause of all things must be an intelligent Being, Dr. Samuel Clarke justly observes, lies the main question between us and Atheists. "For that something must be self-existent, and that that which is self-existent must be eternal and infinite, and the original cause of all things, will not bear much dispute. But all Atheists, whether they hold the world to be of itself eternal, both as to matter and form, or whether they hold the matter to be eternal, and the form contingent, or whatever hypothesis they frame, have always asserted and must maintain, either directly or indirectly, that the self-existent Being is not an intelligent Being ; but either pure inactive matter, or (which in other words is the very same thing) a mere necessary agent. For a mere necessary agent must of necessity either be plainly and directly in the grossest sense unintelligent, which was the notion of the ancient Atheists of the self-existent Being ; or else its intelligence, according to Spinoza and some moderns, must be wholly separate from any power of will and choice, which in respect of excellency and perfection, or indeed to any common sense, is the very same thing as no intelligence at all. Now, that the self-existent Being is not such a blind and unintelligent necessity, but in the most proper sense an understanding and really active Being, does not indeed so obviously and directly appear to us by considerations *à priori* ; but *à posteriori* almost every thing in the world demonstrates to us this great truth, and affords undeniable arguments to prove that the world and all things therein are the effects of an intelligent and knowing Cause.

"And, first, since in general there are manifestly in things various kinds of powers, and very different excellences and degrees of perfection ; it must needs be, that, in the order of causes and effects, the cause must always be more excellent than the effect ; and consequently the self-existent Being, whatever that be supposed to be, must of necessity (being the original of all things) contain in itself the sum and highest degree of all the perfections of all things. Not because that

which is self-existent must therefore have all possible perfections ; (for this, though most certainly true in itself, yet cannot be so easily demonstrated *à priori* ;) but because it is impossible that any effect should have any perfection which was not in the cause. For if it had, then that perfection would be caused by nothing ; which is a plain contradiction. Now, an unintelligent being, it is evident, cannot be endued with all the perfections of all things in the world ; because intelligence is one of those perfections. All things, therefore, cannot arise from an unintelligent original ; and consequently the self-existent Being must of necessity be intelligent.

“ There is no possibility for an Atheist to avoid the force of this argument any other way, than by asserting one of these two things : Either that there is no intelligent being at all in the universe ; or, that intelligence is no distinct perfection, but merely a composition of figure and motion, as colour and sounds are vulgarly supposed to be. Of the former of these assertions every man’s own consciousness is an abundant confutation. For they who contend that beasts are mere machines, have yet never presumed to conjecture that men are so too. And that the latter assertion (in which the main strength of Atheism lies) is most absurd and impossible, shall be shown.

“ For since in men in particular there is undeniably that power which we call thought, intelligence, consciousness, perception, or knowledge ; there must of necessity either have been from eternity, without any original cause at all, an infinite succession of men, whereof no one has had a necessary, but every one a dependent and communicated, being ; or else these beings, endued with perception and consciousness, must at some time or other have arisen purely out of that which had no such quality as sense, perception, or consciousness ; or else they must have been produced by some intelligent superior being. There never was nor can be any Atheist whatsoever that can deny but one of these three suppositions must be the truth. If, therefore, the two former can be proved to be false and impossible, the latter must be owned to be demonstrably true. Now, that the first is impossible, is evident from what

has been already said ; and that the second is likewise impossible, may be thus demonstrated :—

“ If perception or intelligence be any real distinct quality or perfection, and not a mere effect or composition of unintelligent figure and motion, then beings endued with perception or consciousness can never possibly have arisen purely out of that which itself had no such quality as perception or consciousness ; because nothing can ever give to another any perfection which it hath not either actually in itself, or at least in a higher degree. This is very evident ; because, if any thing could give to another any perfection which it has not itself, that perfection would be caused absolutely by nothing ; which is a plain contradiction. If any one here replies, (as Mr. Gildon has done in a letter to Mr. Blount,) that colours, sounds, tastes, and the like, arise from figure and motion, which have no such qualities in themselves ; or that figure, divisibility, mobility, and other qualities of matter, are confessed to be given from God, who yet cannot, without extreme blasphemy, be said to have any such qualities himself ; and that therefore, in like manner, perception or intelligence may arise out of that which has no intelligence itself : The answer is very easy : First, that colours, sounds, tastes, and the like, are by no means effects arising from mere figure and motion ; there being nothing in the bodies themselves, the objects of the senses, that has any manner of similitude to any of these qualities ; but they are plainly thoughts or modifications of the mind itself, which is an intelligent being ; and are not properly caused, but only occasioned, by the impressions of figure and motion. Nor will it at all help an Atheist (as to the present question) though we should here make for him (that we may allow him the greatest possible advantage) even that most absurd supposition, that the mind itself is nothing but mere matter, and not at all an immaterial substance. For, even supposing it to be mere matter, yet he must needs confess it to be such matter as is endued, not only with figure and motion, but also with the quality of intelligence and perception ; and, consequently, as to the present question, it will still come to the same thing,—that colours, sounds, and the

like, which are not qualities of unintelligent bodies, but perceptions of mind, can no more be caused by, or arise from, mere unintelligent figure and motion, than colour can be a triangle, or sound a square, or something be caused by nothing. Secondly: As to the other part of the objection, 'that figure, divisibility, mobility, and other qualities of matter, are' (as we ourselves acknowledge) 'given it from God, who yet cannot, without extreme blasphemy, be said to have any such qualities himself; and that therefore, in like manner, perception or intelligence may arise out of that which has no intelligence itself:' The answer is still easier,—that figure, divisibility, mobility, and other such like qualities of matter, are not real, proper, distinct, and positive powers, but only negative qualities, deficiencies, or imperfections. And though no cause can communicate to its effect any real perfection which it has not itself, yet the effect may easily have many imperfections, deficiencies, or negative qualities, which are not in the cause. Though, therefore, figure, divisibility, mobility, and the like, (which are mere negations, as all limitations and all defects of powers are,) may be in the effect, and not in the cause; yet intelligence (which I now suppose, and shall prove immediately, to be a distinct quality; and which no man can say is a mere negation) cannot possibly be so.

“ Having therefore thus demonstrated, that if perception or intelligence be supposed to be a distinct quality or perfection, (though even but of matter only, if the Atheist pleases,) and not a mere effect or composition of unintelligent figure and motion; then beings endued with perception or consciousness can never have arisen purely out of that which had no such quality as perception or consciousness; because nothing can ever give to another any perfection, which it has not itself: It will easily appear, secondly, that perception or intelligence is really such a distinct quality or perfection, and not possibly a mere effect or composition of unintelligent figure and motion; and that for this plain reason,—because intelligence is not figure, and consciousness is not motion. For whatever can arise from or be compounded of any things, is still only those

very things of which it was compounded. And if infinite compositions or divisions be made eternally, the things will be but eternally the same; and all their possible effects can never be any thing but repetitions of the same. For instance: All possible changes, compositions, or divisions of figure, are still nothing but figure; and all possible compositions or effects of motion can eternally be nothing but mere motion. If, therefore, there ever was a time when there was nothing in the universe but matter and motion, there never could have been any thing else therein but matter and motion. And it would have been as impossible, there should ever have existed any such thing as intelligence or consciousness; or even any such thing as light, or heat, or sound, or colour, or any of those we call secondary qualities of matter; as it is now impossible for motion to be blue or red, or for a triangle to be transformed into a sound. That which has been apt to deceive men in this matter, is this, that they imagine compounds to be somewhat really different from that of which they are compounded; which is a very great mistake. For all the things of which men so judge, either, if they be really different, are not compounds nor effects of what men judge them to be, but are something totally distinct; as when the vulgar think colours and sounds to be properties inherent in bodies, when indeed they are purely thoughts of the mind: Or else, if they be really compounds and effects, then they are not different, but exactly the same that ever they were; as, when two triangles put together make a square, that square is still nothing but two triangles; or when a square cut in halves makes two triangles, those two triangles are still only the two halves of a square; or when the mixture of blue and yellow powder makes a green, that green is still nothing but blue and yellow intermixed, as is plainly visible by the help of microscopes. And, in short, every thing by composition, division, or motion, is nothing else but the very same it was before, taken either in whole or in parts, or in different place or order. He, therefore, that will affirm intelligence to be the effect of a system of unintelligent matter in motion, must either affirm intelligence to be a mere name or external denomination of certain

figures and motions, and that it differs from unintelligent figures and motions no otherwise than as a circle or triangle differs from a square ; which is evidently absurd : Or else he must suppose it to be a real distinct quality, arising from certain motions of a system of matter not in itself intelligent ; and then this no less evidently absurd consequence would follow,—that one quality inhered in another ; for, in that case, not the substance itself, the particles of which the system consists, but the mere mode, the particular mode of motion and figure, would be intelligent.

“ That the self-existent and original cause of all things is an intelligent being, appears abundantly from the excellent variety, order, beauty, and wonderful contrivance, and fitness of all things in the world to their proper and respective ends. Since, therefore, things are thus, it must unavoidably be granted, (even by the most obstinate Atheist,) either that all plants and animals are originally the work of an intelligent being, and created by him in time ; or that, having been from eternity in the same order and method they now are in, they are an eternal effect of an eternal intelligent cause, continually exerting his infinite power and wisdom ; or else that, without any self-existent original at all, they have been derived one from another in an eternal succession, by an infinite progress of dependent causes. The first of these three ways is the conclusion we assert ; the second, so far as the cause of Atheism is concerned, comes to the very same thing ; and the third I have already shown to be absolutely impossible and a contradiction.

“ Supposing it was possible that the form of the world, and all the visible things contained therein, with the order, beauty, and exquisite fitness of their parts ; nay, supposing that even intelligence itself, with consciousness and thought, in all the beings we know, could possibly be the result or effect of mere unintelligent matter, figure, and motion ; (which is the most unreasonable and impossible supposition in the world ;) yet even still there would remain an undeniable demonstration, that the self-existent being (whatever it be supposed to be) must be intelligent. For even these principles themselves,

unintelligent figure and motion, could never have possibly existed, without there had been before them an intelligent cause. I instance in motion : It is evident there is now such a thing as motion in the world ; which either began at some time or other, or was eternal. If it began at any time, then the question is granted, that the first cause is an intelligent being ; for mere unintelligent matter, and that at rest, it is manifest, could never of itself begin to move. On the contrary, if motion was eternal, it was either eternally caused by some eternal intelligent being, or it must of itself be necessary and self-existent ; or else, without any necessity in its own nature, and without any external necessary cause, it must have existed from eternity by an endless successive communication. If motion was eternally caused by some eternal intelligent being ; this also is granting the question, as to the present dispute. If it was of itself necessary and self-existent ; then it follows, that it must be a contradiction in terms, to suppose any matter to be at rest ; besides, (as there is no end of absurdities,) it must also imply a contradiction, to suppose that there might possibly have been originally more or less motion in the universe than there actually was ; which is so very absurd a consequence, that Spinoza himself, though he expressly asserts all things to be necessary, yet seems ashamed here to speak out his opinion, or rather plainly contradicts himself in the question about the original of motion. But if it be said, lastly, that motion, without any necessity in its own nature, and without any external necessary cause, has existed from eternity, merely by an endless successive communication, as Spinoza, inconsistently enough, seems to assert ; this I have before shown to be a plain contradiction. It remains, therefore, that motion must of necessity be originally caused by something that is intelligent ; or else there never could have been any such thing as motion in the world. And, consequently, the self-existent being, the original cause of all things, (whatever it is supposed to be,) must of necessity be an intelligent being."

The argument from the existence of motion to the existence of an intelligent First Cause is so convincing, that the

further illustration of it, in which the absurdities of Atheism are exhibited in another view, will not be unacceptable.

“Consider that all this motion and motive power must have some source and fountain diverse from the dull and sluggish matter moved thereby, unto which it already hath appeared impossible that it should originally and essentially belong.

“Also, that the mighty active Being which hath been proved necessarily existent, and whereto it must first belong, if we suppose it destitute of the self-moderating principle of wisdom and counsel, cannot but be always exerting its motive power, invariably used to the same degree, that is, to its very utmost, and can never cease or fail to do so; for its act knows no limit but that of its power, (if this can have any,) and its power is essential to it, and its essence is necessary.

“Further, that the motion impressed upon the matter of the universe must, hereupon, necessarily have received a continual increase ever since it came into being.

“That, supposing this motive power to have been exerted from eternity, it must have been increased long ago to an infinite excess.

“That hence the coalition of the particles of matter for the forming of any thing had been altogether impossible: For let us suppose this exerted motive power to have been, any instant, but barely sufficient for such a formation; because that could not be despatched in an instant, it would, by its continual increase, be grown so over-sufficient, as, in the next instant, to dissipate the particles but now beginning to unite.

“At least, it would be most apparent, that if ever such a frame of things as we now behold could have been produced, that motive power, increased to so infinite an excess, must have shattered the whole frame in pieces many an age ago, or, rather, never have permitted that such a thing as we call an age could possibly have been.

“Our experience gives us not to observe any such destructive or remarkable changes in the course of nature; and this, indeed, as was long ago foretold, is the great argument of the atheistical scoffers in these latter days,—that things remain as

they were from the beginning of the creation to this day. But let it be soberly weighed, how it is possible that the general consistency which we observe in things throughout the universe, and their steady, orderly posture, can stand with this momentarily increase of motion.

“ For we see when we throw a stone out of our hand, whatever of the impressed force it imparts to the air through which it makes its way, or whatever degree of it vanishes of itself, it yet retains a part a considerable time, which carries it all the length of its journey, and does not vanish and die away on the sudden. So when we here consider in the continual momentarily renewal of the same force, always necessarily going forth from the same mighty Agent, without any moderation or restraint ; that every following impetus doth so immediately overtake the former, that whatever we can suppose lost is yet abundantly over-supplied ; upon the whole, it cannot fail to be ever growing, and, before now, must have grown to that all-destroying excess before mentioned.

“ It is, therefore, evident, that as without the supposition of a self-active Being there could be no such thing as motion, so without the supposition of an intelligent Being (that is, that the same being be both self-active and intelligent) there could be no regular motion, such as is absolutely necessary to the forming and continuing of any of the compacted bodily substances which our eyes behold every day ; yea, or of any whatsoever ; suppose we their figures, their shapes, to be as rude, as deformed, and useless as we can imagine, much less such as the exquisite compositions, and the exact order of things in the universe do evidently require and discover.”*

The proof that the original cause of all things is an intelligent Being, alluded to above by Dr. S. Clarke, as exhibited by the excellent variety, order, beauty, and wonderful contrivance and fitness of all things in the world to their proper and respective ends, has, from the copious and almost infinite illustration of which it is capable, been made a distinct branch of theological science. It is the most obvious and popular,

and therefore the most useful, argument in favour of the intelligence of that Being of infinite perfections whom we call "God;" it is that to which the holy Scriptures refer us for the confirmation of their own doctrine on this subject, and it has been constantly resorted to by all writers on this first principle of religion in every age. When it has been considered separately, and the proofs from nature have been largely given, it has been designated "natural theology;" and has given rise to many important works, equally entertaining, instructive, and convincing.* The basis, and indeed the plan, of Dr. Paley's Natural Theology, are found in the third and following chapters of Howe's Living Temple; but the outline has been filled up, and the subject expanded, by that able writer, with great felicity of illustration, and acute and powerful argument. From the platform of Paley's work, as it may be found in the Living Temple, I shall give a few extracts, which, though they appear in the Natural Theology in a more expansive form, strengthened by additional examples, and clothed, in some of the instances given, with a more correct philosophy, are not superseded. They bear upon the conclusion with an irresistible force, and are expressed with a noble eloquence, though in language a little antiquated in structure.

"As nothing can be produced without a cause, so no cause can work above or beyond its own capacity and natural aptitude. Whatsoever, therefore, is ascribed to any cause above and beyond its ability, all that surplusage is ascribed to no cause at all; and so an effect, in that part at least, were supposed without a cause. And if it, then, follow, when an effect is produced, that it had a cause; why doth it not equally follow, when an effect is produced having manifest characters of wisdom and design upon it, that it had a wise and designing cause? If it be said, 'There are some fortuitous or casual (at least undesigned) productions that look like the effects of wisdom and contrivance, but indeed are not,—as the

* See Boyle On Final Causes; Ray's Wisdom of God in the Creation; Derham's Astro- and Physico-Theology; Sturm's Reflections; Paley's Natural Theology, &c.

birds so orderly and seasonably making their nests, the bees their comb, and the spider its web, which are capable of no design,—that exception needs to be well proved before it be admitted ; and that it be plainly demonstrated both that these creatures are not capable of design, and that there is not a universal, designing cause, from whose directive, as well as operative, influence, no imaginable effect or event can be exempted. In which case it will no more be necessary, that every creature that is observed steadily to work towards an end, should itself design and know it, than that an artificer's tools should know what he is doing with them ; but if they do not, it is plain he must. And surely it lies upon them who so except to prove, in this case, what they say, and not to be so precarious as to beg, or think us so easy as to grant, so much, only because they have thought fit to say it, or would fain have it so, that is, that this or that strange event happened without any designing cause.

“ But, however, I would demand of such as make this exception, whether they think there be any effect at all to which a designing cause was necessary, or which they will judge impossible to have been otherwise produced than by the direction and contrivance of wisdom and counsel. I little doubt but there are thousands of things, laboured and wrought by the hand of man, which they would presently, upon first sight, pronounce to be the effects of skill, and not of chance ; yea, if they only considered their frame and shape, though they understood not their use and end, they would surely think at least some effects or other sufficient to argue to us a designing cause. And would they but soberly consider and resolve what characters or footsteps of wisdom and design might be reckoned sufficient to put us out of doubt, would they not, upon comparing, be brought to acknowledge that there are nowhere any more conspicuous and manifest than in the things daily in view, that go ordinarily with us under the name of ‘ works of nature ? ’ Whence it is plainly consequent, that what men commonly call ‘ universal nature,’ if they would be content no longer to lurk in the darkness of an obscure and uninterpreted word, they must confess, is nothing else but

common providence, that is, the universal power which is everywhere active in the world, in conjunction with the unerring wisdom which guides and moderates all its exertions and operations, or the wisdom which directs and governs that power. They must, therefore, see cause to acknowledge that an exact order and disposition of parts, in very neat and elegant compositions, do plainly argue wisdom and skill in the contrivance; only they will distinguish and say, 'It is so in the effects of art, but not of nature.' What is this but to deny in particular what they granted in general? to make what they have said signify nothing more than if they had said, 'Such exquisite **order** of parts is the effect of wisdom where it is the effect of wisdom, but it is not the effect of wisdom where it is not the effect of wisdom;' and to trifle instead of giving a reason why things are so? And whence take they their advantage for this trifling? or do they hope to hide their folly in it? but that they think while what is meant by 'art' is known, what is meant by 'nature' cannot be known? But if it be not known, how can they tell but their distinguishing members are coincident, and run into one? Yea, and if they would allow the thing itself to speak, and the effect to confess and dictate the name of its own cause, how plain is it that they do run into one; and that the expression imports no impropriety which we somewhere find in Cicero, 'the art of nature;' or rather, that nature is nothing else but divine art, at least in as near an analogy as between any things divine and human? But, that this matter (even the thing itself, waving for the present the consideration of names) may be a little more narrowly discussed and searched into, let some curious piece of workmanship be offered to such a sceptic's view, the making whereof he did not see, nor of any thing like it, and we will suppose him not told that this was made by the hand of any man, nor that he hath any thing to guide his judgment about the way of its becoming what it is, but only his own view of the thing itself; and yet he shall presently, without hesitation, pronounce, 'This was the effect of much skill.' I would here inquire, 'Why do you so pronounce?' or, 'What is the reason of this your judgment?'

Surely he would not say he hath no reason at all for this so confident and unwavering determination ; for then he would not be determined, but speak by chance, and be indifferent to say that or any thing else. Somewhat or other there must be, that, when he is asked ‘ Is this the effect of skill ? ’ shall so suddenly and irresistibly captivate him into an assent that it is so, that he cannot think otherwise. Nay, if a thousand men were asked the same question, they would as undoubtingly say the same thing ; and then, since there is a reason for this judgment, what can be devised to be the reason, but that there are so manifest characters and evidences of skill in the composure as are not attributable to any thing else ? Now, here I would further demand, ‘ Is there any thing in this reason, yea or no ? Doth it signify any thing, or is it of any value for the purpose for which it is alleged ? ’ Surely it is of very great, inasmuch as, when it is considered, it leaves it not in a man’s power to think any thing else ; and what can be said more potently and efficaciously to demonstrate ? But now, if this reason signify any thing, it signifies thus much ; that wheresoever there are equal characters and evidences of skill, a skilful agent must be acknowledged. And so it will—in spite of cavil—conclude, universally and abstractedly, from what we can suppose distinctly signified by the terms of ‘ art ’ and ‘ nature, ’ that whatsoever effect hath such or equal characters of skill upon it, did proceed from a skilful cause ; that is, that if this effect be said to be from a skilful cause, as having manifest characters of skill upon it, then every such effect that hath equally manifest characters of skill upon it must be, with equal reason, concluded to be from a skilful cause.

“ We will acknowledge skill to act, and wit to contrive, to be very distinguishable things, and, in reference to some works, (as the making some curious automaton, or self-moving engine,) are commonly lodged in divers subjects ; that is, the contrivance exercises the wit and invention of one, and the making the manual skill and dexterity of others ; but the manifest characters of both will be seen in the effect ; that is, the curious elaborateness of each several part shows the latter,

and the order and dependence of parts, and their conspiracy to one common end, the former. Each betokens design ; or at least the smith or carpenter must be understood to design his own part, that is, to do as he was directed ; both together do plainly bespeak an agent that knew what he did ; and that the thing was not done by chance, or was not the casual product of only being busy at random, or making a careless stir, without aiming at any thing. And this, no man that is in his wits would, upon sight of the whole frame, more doubt to assent unto, than that two and two make four. And he would certainly be thought mad, that should profess to think that only by some one's making a bustle among several small fragments of brass, iron, and wood, these parts happened to be thus curiously formed, and came together into this frame, of their own accord.

“Or lest this should be thought to intimate too rude a representation of their conceit who think this world to have fallen into this frame and order wherein it is, by the agitation of the moving parts or particles of matter, without the direction of a wise mover ; and that we may also make the case as plain as is possible to the most ordinary capacity, we will suppose, for instance, that one who had never before seen a watch, or any thing of that sort, hath now this little engine first offered to his view ; can we doubt but that he would, upon the mere sight of its figure, structure, and the very curious workmanship which we will suppose appearing in it, presently acknowledge the artificer's hand ? But if he were also made to understand the use and purpose for which it serves, and it were distinctly shown him how each thing contributes, and all things in this little fabric concur to this purpose,—the exact measuring and dividing of time by minutes, hours, and months, he would certainly both confess and praise the great ingenuity of the first inventor. But now, if a by-stander, beholding him in this admiration, would undertake to show a profounder reach and strain of wit, and should say, ‘Sir, you are mistaken concerning the composition of this so-much-admired piece ; it was not made or designed by the hand or skill of any one ; there were only an innumerable company of little atoms, or very

small bodies, much too small to be perceived by your sense, that were busily frisking and plying to and fro about the place of its nativity; and by a strange chance, or a stranger fate, and the necessary laws of that motion which they were unavoidably put into, by a certain boisterous, undesigning mover, they fell together into this small bulk, so as to compose this very shape and figure, and with this same number and order of parts which you now behold; one squadron of these busy particles (little thinking what they were about) agreeing to make one wheel, and another a second, in that proportion which you see; others of them also falling and becoming fixed in so happy a posture and situation as to describe the several figures by which the little moving fingers point out the hours of the day, and the day of the month; and all conspired to fall together, each into its own place, in so lucky a juncture, as that the regular motion failed not to ensue which we see is now observed in it, —what man is either so wise or so foolish, (for it is hard to determine whether the excess or the defect should best qualify him to be of this faith,) as to be capable of being made believe this piece of natural history? And if any one should give this account of the production of such a trifle, would he not be thought in jest? But if he persist, and solemnly profess that thus he takes it to have been, would he not be thought in good earnest mad? And let but any sober reason judge whether we have not unspeakably more madness to contend against in such as suppose this world, and the bodies of living creatures, to have fallen into this frame and orderly disposition of parts wherein they are, without the direction of a wise and designing cause; and whether there be not an incomparably greater number of most wild and arbitrary suppositions in their fiction, than in this; besides the innumerable supposed repetitions of the same strange chances all the world over; even as numberless, not only as productions, but as the changes that continually happen to all the things produced. And if the concourse of atoms could make this world, why not (for it is but little to mention such a thing as this) a porch, or a temple, or a house, or a city, as Tully speaks, which were less operose and much more easy performances?

“It is not to be supposed that all should be astronomers, anatomists, or natural philosophers, that shall read these lines ; and therefore it is intended not to insist upon particulars, and to make as little use as is possible of terms that would only be agreeable to that supposition. But surely such general, easy reflections on the frame of the universe, and the order of parts in the bodies of all sorts of living creatures, as the meanest ordinary understanding is capable of, would soon discover incomparably greater evidence of wisdom and design in the contrivance of these, than in that of a watch or a clock. And if there were any whose understandings are but of that size and measure as to suppose that the whole frame of the heavens serves to no other purpose than to be of some such use to us mortals here on earth as that instrument ; if they would but allow themselves leisure to think and consider, they might discern the most convincing and amazing discoveries of wise contrivance and design (as well as of vastest might and power) in disposing things into so apt a subserviency to that meaner end ; and that so exact a knowledge is had thereby of times and seasons, days and years, as that the simplest idiot in a country may be able to tell you, when the light of the sun is withdrawn from his eyes, at what time it will return, and when it will look in at such a window, and when at the other ; and by what degrees his days and nights shall either be increased or diminished ; and what proportion of time he shall have for his labours in this season of the year, and what in that ; without the least suspicion or fear that it shall ever fall out otherwise.

“For let us suppose, (what no man can pretend is more impossible, and what any man must confess is less considerable, than what our eyes daily see,) that in some part of the air near this earth, and within such limits as that the whole scene might be conveniently beheld at one view, there should suddenly appear a little globe of pure flaming light resembling that of the sun ; and suppose it fixed as a centre to another body, or moving about that other as its centre, (as this or that hypothesis best pleases us,) which we could plainly perceive to be a proportionably little earth, beautified with little trees and

woods, flowery fields and flowing rivulets, with larger lakes into which these discharge themselves; and suppose we see other planets all of proportionable bigness to the narrow limits assigned them, placed at their due distances, and playing about this supposed earth or sun, so as to measure their shorter and soon-absolved days, months, and years, or two, twelve, or thirty years, according to their supposed circuits; would they not presently, and with great amazement, confess an intelligent contriver and maker of this whole frame, above a Posidonius or any mortal? And have we not, in the present frame of things, a demonstration of wisdom and counsel as far exceeding that which is now supposed, as the making some toy or bauble to please a child is less an argument of wisdom than the contrivance of somewhat that is of apparent and universal use? Or, if we could suppose this present state of things to have but newly begun, and ourselves pre-existent, so that we could take notice of the very passing of things out of horrid confusion into the comely order they are now in, would not this put the matter out of doubt? But might what would yesterday have been the effect of wisdom, better have been brought about by chance, five or six thousand years, or any longer time, ago? It speaks, not want of evidence in the thing, but want of consideration, and of exercising our understandings, if what were new would not only convince but astonish, and what is old, of the same importance, doth not so much as convince!

“And let them that understand any thing of the composition of a human body (or indeed of any living creature) but bethink themselves whether there be not equal contrivance, at least, appearing in the composure of that admirable fabric, as of any the most admired machine or engine devised and made by human skill and wit. If we pitch upon any thing of known and common use, as suppose again, a clock or watch, which is no sooner seen than it is acknowledged (as hath been said) the effect of a designing cause, will we not confess as much of the body of a man? Yea, what comparison is there, when, in the structure of some one single member, as a hand, a foot, an eye, or ear, there appears, upon a diligent search, unspeakably greater curiosity, whether we consider the variety of parts,

their exquisite figuration, or their apt disposition to the distinct uses and ends these members serve for, than is to be seen in any clock or watch? Concerning which uses of the several parts in man's body, Galen, so largely discoursing in seventeen books, inserts, on the leg, this epiphonema, upon the mention of one particular instance of our most wise Maker's provident care: 'Unto whom,' saith he, 'I compose these Commentaries,' (meaning his present work of unfolding the useful figuration of the human body,) 'as certain hymns, or songs of praise, esteeming true piety rather to consist in this, that I first may know, and then declare to others, his wisdom, power, providence, and goodness, than in sacrificing to him many hecatombs; and in the ignorance whereof there is greatest impiety, rather than in abstaining from sacrifice.' 'Nor' (as he adds in the close of that excellent work) 'is the most perfect natural artifice to be seen in man only, but you may find the like industrious design and wisdom of the author in any living creature which you shall please to dissect; and by how much the less it is, so much the greater admiration shall it excite in you; which those artists show, that describe some great thing (contractedly) in a very small space: As that person who lately engraved Phaeton carried in his chariot with his four horses upon a little ring,—a most incredible sight! But there is nothing in matters of this nature more strange than in the structure of the leg of a flea.' How much more might it be said of all its inward **parts**! 'Therefore,' as he adds, 'the greatest commodity of such a work accrues not to Physicians, but to them who are studious of nature, namely, the knowledge of our Maker's perfection, and that' (as he had said a little above) 'it establishes the principle of the most perfect theology; which theology is much more excellent than all medicine.'

"It were too great an undertaking, and beyond the designed limits of this discourse, (though it would be to excellent purpose, if it could be done with amusing terms, and in that easy, familiar way as to be capable of common use,) to pursue and trace distinctly the prints and footsteps of the admirable wisdom which appears in the structure and frame of this outer

temple. For even our bodies themselves are said to be the temples of the Holy Ghost. (1 Cor. vi. 19.) And, to dwell awhile in the contemplation and discovery of those numerous instances of most apparent, ungainsayable sagacity and providence which offer themselves to view in every part and particle of this fabric : How most commodiously all things are ordered in it ! with how strangely cautious circumspection and foresight, not only destructive, but even (perpetually) vexatious and afflicting, incongruities are avoided and provided against, to pose ourselves upon the sundry obvious questions that might be put for the evincing of such provident foresight ! As for instance : How comes it to pass that the several parts which we find to be double in our bodies, are not single only ? Is this altogether by chance,—that there are two eyes, ears, nostrils, hands, feet ? &c. What a miserable, shiftless creature had man been, if there had only been allowed him one foot ! A seeing, hearing, talking, unmoving statue :—That the hand is divided into fingers ?—those so conveniently situate, one in so fitly opposite a posture to the rest ?

“And what, if some one pair or other of these parts had been universally wanting ? the hands, the feet, the eyes, the ears ? how great a misery had it inferred upon mankind ! And is it only a casualty that it is not so ? that the back-bone is composed of so many joints, (twenty-four, besides those of that which is the basis and sustainer of the whole,) and is not all of a piece, by which stooping, or any motion of the head or neck, diverse from that of the whole body, had been altogether impossible ; that there is such variety and curiosity in the ways of joining the bones together in that, and other parts of the body, that in some parts they are joined by mere adherence of one to another, either with or without an intervening medium, and both these ways so diversely ; that others are fastened together by proper jointing, so as to suit and be accompanied with motion, either more obscure or more manifest, and this, either by a deeper or more superficial insertion of one bone into another, or by a mutual insertion, and that in different ways ; and that all these should be so exactly accommodated to the several parts and uses to which they

belong and serve ;—was all this without design ? Who that views the curious and apt texture of the eye, can think it was not made on purpose to see with ; and the ear, upon the like view, for hearing ; when so many things must concur that these actions might be performed by these organs, and are found to do so ? Or who can think that the sundry little engines belonging to the eye were not made with design to move it upwards, downwards, to this side or that, or whirl it about, as there should be occasion ; without which instruments and their appendages, no such motion could have been ? Who, that is not stupidly perverse, can think that the sundry inward parts (which it would require a volume distinctly to speak of, and but to mention them and their uses would too unproportionably swell this part of this discourse) were not made purposely by a designing agent, for the ends they so aptly and constantly serve for ? The want of some one among divers whereof, or but a little misplacing, or if things had been but a little otherwise than they are, had inferred an impossibility that such a creature as man could have subsisted, or been propagated, upon the face of the earth. As what, if there had not been such a receptacle prepared as the stomach is, and so formed, and placed as it is, to receive and digest necessary nutriment ; had not the whole frame of man besides been in vain ? Or what, if the passage from it downward had not been made somewhat a little ascending, so as to detain a convenient time what it received, but that what was taken in were suddenly transmitted ? It is evident the whole structure had been ruined as soon as made. What, (to instance in what seems so small a matter,) if that little cover had been wanting at the entrance of that through which we breathe ; (the depression whereof by the weight of what we eat or drink, shuts it and prevents meat and drink from going down that way ;) had not unavoidable suffocation ensued ? And who can number the instances that can be given besides ? Now, when there is a concurrence of so many things absolutely necessary, (concerning which the common saying is as applicable, more frequently wont to be applied to matters of morality,—

‘ Goodness is from the concurrence of all causes ; evil, from any

defect,') each so aptly and opportunely serving its own proper use ; and all, one common end ; certainly to say that so manifold, so regular,* and stated a subserviency to that end, and the end itself, were undesigned, and things casually fell out thus, is to say we know or care not what.

“ We will only, before we close this consideration, concerning the mere frame of a human body, (which hath been so hastily and superficially proposed,) offer a supposition which is no more strange (excluding the vulgar notion by which nothing is strange, but what is not common) than the thing itself as it actually is ; namely, that the whole more external covering of the body of a man were made, instead of skin and flesh, of some very transparent substance, flexible, but clear as very crystal ; through which, and the other more inward (and as transparent) integuments, or enfoldings, we could plainly perceive the situation and order of all the internal parts, and how they each of them perform their distinct offices :—If we could discern the continual motion of the blood, how it is conveyed, by its proper conduits, from its first source and fountain, partly downwards to the lower entrails, (if rather it ascend not from thence, as at least what afterwards becomes blood doth,) partly upwards, to its admirable elaboratory, the heart ; where it is refined and furnished with fresh vital spirits, and so transmitted thence by the distinct vessels, prepared for this purpose :—Could we perceive the curious contrivance of those little doors, by which it is let in and out, on this side and on that ; the order and course of its circulation, its most commodious distribution by two social channels, or conduit-pipes that every where accompany one another throughout the body :—Could we discern the curious artifice of the brain, its ways of purgation ; and were it possible to pry into the secret chambers and receptacles of the less or more pure spirits there, perceive their manifold conveyances, and the rare texture of that net commonly called the ‘ wonderful one :’—Could we behold the veins, arteries, and nerves, all of them arising from their proper and distinct originals ; and their orderly dispersion, for the most part, by pairs and conjunctions, on this side and that, from the middle of the back ;

with the curiously-wrought branches, which, supposing these to appear, duly diversified, as so many more dusky strokes in this transparent frame, they would be found to make throughout the whole of it; were every smaller fibre thus made at once discernible, especially those innumerable threads into which the spinal marrow is distributed at the bottom of the back:—And could we, through the same medium, perceive those numerous little machines made to serve unto voluntary motions, (which in the whole body are computed, by some, to the number of four hundred and thirty, or thereabouts, or so many of them as according to the present supposition could possibly come in view,) and discern their composition; their various and elegant figures,—round, square, long, triangular, &c., and behold them do their offices, and see how they ply to and fro, and work in their respective places, as any motion is to be performed by them:—Were all these things, I say, thus made liable to an easy and distinct view, who would not admiringly cry out, ‘How fearfully and wonderfully am I made!’ And sure there is no man sober who would not, upon such a sight, pronounce that man mad that should suppose such a production to have been a mere undesigned casualty! At least, if there be any thing in the world that may be thought to carry sufficiently convincing evidences in it, of its having been made industriously, and on purpose, not by chance, would not this composition, thus offered to view, be esteemed to do so much more? Yea, and if it did only bear upon it characters equally evidential of wisdom and design, with what doth certainly so, though in the lowest degree, it were sufficient to evince our present purpose. For if one such instance as this would bring the matter no higher than to a bare equality, that would at least argue a maker of man’s body, as wise, and as properly designing, as the artificer of any such slighter piece of workmanship, that may yet, certainly, be concluded the effect of skill and design. And then, enough might be said, from other instances, to manifest him unspeakably superior. And that the matter would be brought, at least, to an equality, upon the supposition now made, there can be no doubt, if any one be judge

that hath not abjured his understanding and his eyes together. And what then, if we lay aside that supposition, (which only somewhat gratifies fancy and imagination,) doth that alter the case? Or is there the less of wisdom and contrivance expressed in this work of forming man's body, only for that it is not so easily and suddenly obvious to our sight? Then we might with the same reason say, concerning some curious piece of carved work that is thought fit to be kept locked up in a cabinet, when we see it, that there was admirable workmanship shown in doing it; but as soon as it is again shut up in its repository, that there was none at all. Inasmuch as we speak of the objective characters of wisdom and design, that are in the thing itself, (though they must some way or other come under our notice, otherwise we can be capable of arguing nothing from them, yet,) since we have sufficient assurance that there really are such characters in the structure of the body of man as have been mentioned, and a thousand more than have been thought necessary to be mentioned here; it is plain that the greater or less facility of finding them out, so that we be at a certainty that they are, (whether by the slower or more gradual search of our own eyes, or by relying upon the testimony of such as have purchased themselves that satisfaction by their own labour and diligence,) is merely accidental to the thing itself we are discoursing of; and neither adds to, nor detracts from, the rational evidence of the present argument. Or if it do either, the more abstruse paths of divine wisdom in this, as in other things, do rather recommend it the more to our adoration and reverence, than if every thing were obvious, and lay open to the first glance of a more careless eye. The things which we are sure (or may be, if we do not shut our eyes) the wise Maker of this world hath done, do sufficiently serve to assure us, that he could have done this also,—that is, have made every thing in the frame and shape of our bodies conspicuous in the way but now supposed,—if he had thought it fit. He hath done greater things. And since he hath not thought that fit, we may be bold to say, the doing of it would signify more trifling, and less design. It gives us a more amiable and comely representation of the

Being we are treating of, that his works are less for ostentation than use ; and that his wisdom and other attributes appear in them rather to the instruction of sober, than the gratification of vain, minds.

“ We may, therefore, confidently conclude, that the figuration of the human body carries with it as manifest, unquestionable evidences of design, as any piece of human artifice, that most confessedly, in the judgment of any man, doth so ; and, therefore, had as certainly a designing cause. We may challenge the world to show a disparity, unless it be that the advantage is inconceivably great on our side. For would not any one that hath not abandoned both his reason and his modesty, be ashamed to confess and admire the skill that is shown in making a statue, or the picture of a man, that (as one ingeniously says) is but the shadow of his skin ; and deny the wisdom that appears in the composure of his body itself, that contains so numerous and so various engines and instruments for sundry purposes in it, as that it is become an art, and a very laudable one, but to discover and find out the art and skill that are shown in the contrivance and formation of them ?

“ And now, if any should be so incurably blind as not to perceive, or so perversely wilful as not to acknowledge, an appearance of wisdom in the frame and figuration of the body of an animal (peculiarly of man) more than equal to what appears in any the most exquisite piece of human artifice, and which no wit of man can ever fully imitate ; although, as hath been said, an acknowledged equality would suffice to evince a wise Maker thereof, yet because it is the existence of God we are now speaking of, and that it is therefore not enough to evince, but to magnify, the wisdom we would ascribe to him ; we shall pass from the parts and frame to the consideration of the more principal powers and functions of terrestrial creatures ; ascending from such as agree to the less perfect order of these, to those of the more perfect, namely, of man himself. And surely to have been the author of faculties that shall enable to such functions, will evidence a wisdom that defies our imitation, and will dismay the attempts of it.

“ We begin with that of growth. Many sorts of rare

engines we acknowledge contrived by the wit of man ; but who hath ever made one that could grow, or that had in it a self-improving power ? A tree, an herb, a pile of grass, may upon this account challenge all the world to make such a thing ; that is, to implant the power of growing into any thing to which it doth not natively belong, or to make a thing to which it doth.

“ By what art would they make a seed ? and which way would they inspire it with a seminal form ? And they that think this whole globe of the earth was compacted by the casual (or fatal) coalition of particles of matter, by what magic would they conjure up so many to come together as to make one clod ? We vainly hunt, with a lingering mind, after miracles ; if we did not more vainly mean by them nothing else but novelties, we are compassed about with such ; and the greatest miracle is, that we see them not. You with whom the daily productions of nature (as you call it) are so cheap, see if you can do the like. Try your skill upon a rose. Yea, but you must have pre-existent matter. But can you ever prove the Maker of the world had so, or even defend the possibility of uncreated matter ? And suppose they had the free grant of all the matter between the crown of their head and the moon, could they tell what to do with it, or how to manage it, so as to make it yield them one single flower, that they might glory in as their own production ?

“ And what mortal man that hath reason enough about him to be serious, and to think awhile, would not even be amazed at the miracle of nutrition, or that there are things in the world capable of nourishment ? Or who would attempt an imitation here, or not despair to perform any thing like it ? that is, to make any nourishable thing. Are we not here infinitely outdone ? Do we not see ourselves compassed about with wonders ? And are we not ourselves such ; in that we see and are creatures, from all whose parts there is a continual defluxion, and yet that receive a constant, gradual supply and renovation, by which they are continued in the same state ; as the bush burning, but not consumed ? It is easy to give an artificial frame to a thing that shall gradually decay and waste,

till it be quite gone and disappear. You could raise a structure of snow that would soon do that. But can your manual skill compose a thing that, like our bodies, shall be continually melting away, and be continually repaired, through so long a tract of time? Nay, but can you tell how it is done? You know in what method, and by what instruments, food is received, concocted, separated, and so much as must serve for nourishment turned into chyle, and that into blood, first grosser, and then more refined, and that distributed into all parts for this purpose; yea, and what then? Therefore are you as wise as your Maker? Could you have made such a thing as the stomach, a liver, a heart, a vein, an artery? Or are you so very sure what the digestive quality is? Or if you are, and know what things best serve to maintain, to repair, or strengthen it, who implanted that quality, both where it is so immediately useful, or in the other things you would use for the service of that? Or how, if such things had not been prepared to your hand, would you have devised to persuade the particles of matter into so useful and happy a conjuncture, as that such a quality might result? Or, to speak more suitably to the most, how, if you had not been shown the way, would you have thought it were to be done; or which way would you have gone to work to turn meat and drink into flesh and blood?

“And what shall we say of spontaneous motion, wherewith we find also creatures endowed that are so mean and despicable in our eyes, (as well as ourselves,) that is, that so silly a thing as a fly, a gnat, &c., should have a power in it to move itself, or stop its own motion, at its own pleasure? How far have all attempted imitations in this kind fallen short of this perfection! And how much more excellent a thing is the smallest and most contemptible insect than the most admired machine we ever heard or read of; (as Archytas Tarentinus’s dove, so anciently celebrated, or, more lately, Regiomontanus’s fly, or his eagle, or any the like;) not only as having this peculiar power above any thing of this sort, but as having the sundry other powers besides, meeting in it, whereof these are wholly destitute!

“ And should we go on to instance further in the several powers of sensation, both external and internal, the various instincts, appetitions, passions, sympathies, antipathies, the powers of memory, and, we might add, of speech, that we find the inferior orders of creatures either generally furnished with, or some of them, as to this last, disposed unto ; how should we even over-do the present business, and too needlessly insult over human wit, (which we must suppose to have already yielded the cause,) in challenging it to produce and offer to view a hearing, seeing engine, that can imagine, talk, is capable of hunger, thirst, of desire, anger, fear, grief, &c., as its own creature, concerning which it may glory and say, ‘ I have done this ! ’

“ Is it so admirable a performance, and so ungainsayable an evidence of skill and wisdom, with much labour and long travail of mind, a busy restless agitation of working thoughts, the often renewal of frustrated attempts, the varying of defeated trials, this way and that, at length to hit upon, and by much pains, and with a slow, gradual progress, by the use of who-can-tell-how-many sundry sorts of instruments or tools, by long hewing, hammering, turning, filing, to compose one only single machine of such a frame and structure as that, by the frequent reinforcement of a skilful hand, it may be capable of some (and that otherwise but a very short-lived) motion ? And is it no argument or effect of wisdom so easily and certainly, without labour, error, or disappointment, to frame both so infinite a variety of kinds, and so innumerable individuals of every such kind of living creatures, that not only with the greatest facility can move themselves with so many sorts of motion, downwards, upwards, to and fro, this way or that, with a progressive or circular, a swifter or a slower motion, at their own pleasure ; but can also grow, propagate, see, hear, desire, joy, &c. ? Is this no work of wisdom, but only either blind fate or chance ? Of how strangely perverse and odd a complexion is that understanding (if yet it may be called an understanding) that can make this judgment !

“ But because whatsoever comes under the name of cogitation, properly taken, is assigned to some higher cause than

mechanism ; and that there are operations belonging to man which lay claim to a reasonable soul as the immediate principle and author of them ; we have yet this further step to advance, that is, to consider the most apparent evidence we have of a wise, designing Agent, in the powers and nature of this more excellent, and, among other things, more obvious to our notice, the noblest of his productions.

“ And were it not for the slothful neglect of the most to study themselves, we should not have need to recount unto men the common and well-known abilities and excellences which peculiarly belong to their own nature. They might take notice, without being told, that first, as to their intellectual faculty, they have somewhat about them that can think, understand, frame notions of things, that can rectify or supply the false or defective representations which are made to them by their external senses and fancies, that can conceive of things far above the reach and sphere of sense, the moral good or evil of actions or inclinations, and what there is in them of rectitude or pravity ; whereby they can animadvert, and cast their eye inward upon themselves, observe the good or evil acts or inclinations, the knowledge, ignorance, dulness, vigour, tranquillity, trouble, and, generally, the perfections or imperfections of their own minds ; that can apprehend the general natures of things, the future existence of what yet is not, with the future appearance of that which, to us, as yet, appears not.

“ They may take notice of their power of comparing things, of discerning and making a judgment of their agreements and disagreements, their proportions and dispositions to one another ; of affirming or denying this or that, concerning such or such things ; and of pronouncing, with more or less confidence, concerning the truth or falsehood of such affirmations or negations.

“ And, moreover, of their power of arguing, and inferring one thing from another, so as, from one plain and evident principle, to draw forth a long chain of consequences, that may be discerned to be linked therewith.

“ They have, withal, to consider the liberty and the large
†

capacity of the human will, which, when it is itself, rejects the dominion of any other than the supreme Lord's, and refuses satisfaction in any other than the supreme and most comprehensive good.

“And upon even so hasty and transient a view of a thing furnished with such powers and faculties, we have sufficient occasion to bethink ourselves, ‘How came such a thing as this into being? Whence did it spring, or to what original doth it owe itself?’ More particularly we have here two things to be remembered: That notwithstanding so high excellences, the soul of man doth yet appear to be a caused being, that some time had a beginning; that by them it is sufficiently evident that it owes itself to a wise and intelligent Cause.”

The instance of a watch, chosen by Howe, for the illustration of his argument,—that evidences of design, in any production, are evidences of a designing cause,—is thus strikingly amplified and applied by Paley to refute the leading atheistic theories: “The mechanism of the watch being once observed and understood, the inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker; that there must have existed, at some time, and at some place or other, an artificer or artificers, who formed it for the purpose which we find it actually to answer, who comprehended its construction, and designed its use.

“Nor would it, I apprehend, weaken the conclusion, that we had never seen a watch made; that we had never known an artist capable of making one; that we were altogether incapable of executing such a piece of workmanship ourselves, or of understanding in what manner it was performed; all this being no more than what is true of some exquisite remains of ancient art, of some lost arts, and, to the generality of mankind, of the more curious productions of modern manufacture. Does one man in a million know how oval frames are turned? Ignorance of this kind exalts our opinion of the unseen and unknown artist's skill, (if he be unseen and unknown,) but raises no doubt in their minds of the existence and agency of such an artist, at some former time, and in some place or other. Nor can I perceive that it varies at all the

inference whether the question arise concerning a human agent, or concerning an agent of a different species, or an agent possessing, in some respects, a different nature.

“Neither, secondly, would it invalidate our conclusion, that the watch sometimes went wrong, or that it seldom went exactly right. The purpose of the machinery, the design, and the designer might be evident, and, in the case supposed, would be evident, in whatever way we accounted for the irregularity of the movement, or whether we could account for it or not. It is not necessary that a machine be perfect in order to show with what design it was made; still less necessary where the only question is, whether it were made with any design at all.

“Nor, thirdly, would it bring any uncertainty into the argument, if there were a few parts of the watch concerning which we could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they conduced to the general effect; or even some parts concerning which we could not ascertain whether they conduced to that effect in any manner whatever. For, as to the first branch of the case, if, by the loss, or disorder, or decay of the parts in question, the movement of the watch were found in fact to be stopped, or disturbed, or retarded, no doubt would remain in our minds as to the utility or intention of these parts, although we should be unable to investigate the manner according to which, or the connexion by which, the ultimate effect depended upon their action or assistance; and the more complex is the machine, the more likely is this obscurity to arise. Then, as to the second thing supposed, namely, that there were parts which might be spared without prejudice to the movement of the watch, and that we had proved this by experiment,—these superfluous parts, even if we were completely assured that they were such, would not vacate the reasoning which we had instituted concerning other parts. The indication of contrivance remained, with respect to them, nearly as it was before.

“Nor, fourthly, would any man in his senses think the existence of the watch, with its various machinery, accounted for, by being told that it was one out of possible combinations

of material forms ; that whatever he had found, in the place where he had found the watch, must have contained some internal configuration or other ; and that this configuration might be the structure now exhibited, namely, of the works of a watch, as well as a different structure.

“ Nor, fifthly, would it yield his inquiry more satisfaction to be answered, that there existed in things a principle of order which had disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation. He never knew a watch made by the principle of order ; nor can he even form to himself an idea of what is meant by a principle of order, distinct from the intelligence of the watchmaker.

“ Sixthly : He would be surprised to hear, that the mechanism of the watch was no proof of contrivance, only a motive to induce the mind to think so.

“ And not less surprised to be informed, that the watch in his hand was nothing more than the result of the laws of metallic nature. It is a perversion of language to assign any law as the efficient, operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent ; for it is only the mode according to which an agent proceeds : It implies a power ; for it is the order according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the law does nothing, is nothing. The expression, ‘the law of metallic nature,’ may sound strange and harsh to a philosophic ear, but it seems quite as justifiable as some others which are more familiar to him ; such as, ‘the law of vegetable nature,’ ‘the law of animal nature,’ or indeed as ‘the law of nature’ in general, when assigned as the cause of phenomena, in exclusion of agency and power ; or when it is substituted into the place of these.

“ Neither, lastly, would our observer be driven out of his conclusion, or from his confidence in its truth, by being told that he knew nothing at all about the matter. He knows enough for his argument. He knows the utility of the end ; he knows the subserviency and adaptation of the means to the end. These points being known, his ignorance of other points, his doubts concerning other points, affect not the certainty

of his reasoning. The consciousness of knowing little need not beget a distrust of that which he does know.

“ Suppose, in the next place, that the person who found the watch should, after some time, discover that, in addition to all the properties which he had hitherto observed in it, it possessed the unexpected property of producing, in the course of its movement, another watch like itself; (the thing is conceivable;) that it contained within it a mechanism, a system of parts, a mould for instance, or a complex adjustment of lathes, files, and other tools, evidently and separately calculated for this purpose; let us inquire, what effect ought such a discovery to have upon his former conclusion.

“ The first effect would be to increase his admiration of the contrivance, and his conviction of the consummate skill of the contriver. Whether he regarded the object of the contrivance, the distinct apparatus, the intricate, yet in many parts intelligible, mechanism, by which it was carried on, he would perceive, in this new observation, nothing but an additional reason for doing what he had already done,—for referring the construction of the watch to design and to supreme art. If that construction without this property, or, which is the same thing, before this property had been noticed, proved intention and art to have been employed about it; still more strong would the proof appear, when he came to the knowledge of this further property, the crown and perfection of all the rest.

“ He would reflect, that though the watch before him were, in some sense, the maker of the watch which was fabricated in the course of its movements, yet it was in a very different sense from that in which a carpenter, for instance, is the maker of a chair; the author of its contrivance, the cause of the relation of its parts to their use. With respect to these, the first watch was no cause at all to the second; in no such sense as this was it the author of the constitution and order, either of the parts which the new watch contained, or of the parts by the aid and instrumentality of which it was produced. We might possibly say, but with great latitude of expression, that a stream of water ground corn: But no latitude of expression would allow

us to say, no stretch of conjecture could lead us to think, that the stream of water built the mill, though it were too ancient for us to know who the builder was. What the stream of water does in the affair is neither more nor less than this : By the application of an unintelligent impulse to a mechanism previously arranged, arranged independently of it, and arranged by intelligence, an effect is produced, namely, the corn is ground. But the effect results from the arrangement. The force of the stream cannot be said to be the cause or author of the effect, still less of the arrangement. Understanding and plan in the formation of the mill were not the less necessary, for any share which the water has in grinding the corn : Yet is this share the same as that which the watch would have contributed to the production of the new watch, upon the supposition assumed in the last section. Therefore,

“ Though it be now no longer probable, that the individual watch which our observer had found was made immediately by the hand of an artificer, yet doth not this alteration in any wise affect the inference, that an artificer had been originally employed and concerned in the production. The argument from design remains as it was. Marks of design and contrivance are no more accounted for now than they were before. In the same thing, we may ask for the cause of different properties. We may ask for the cause of the colour of a body, of its hardness, of its heat ; and these causes may be all different. We are now asking for the cause of that subserviency to an use, that relation to an end, which we have marked in the watch before us. No answer is given to this question by telling us that a preceding watch produced it. There cannot be design without a designer ; contrivance, without a contriver ; order, without choice ; arrangement, without any thing capable of arranging ; subserviency and relation to a purpose, without that which could intend a purpose ; means suitable to an end, and executing their office in accomplishing that end, without the end ever having been contemplated, or the means accommodated to it. Arrangement, disposition of parts, subserviency of means to an end, relation of instruments to an use, imply the presence of intel-

ligence and mind. No one, therefore, can rationally believe, that the insensible, inanimate watch, from which the watch before us issued, was the proper cause of the mechanism we so much admire in it ; could be truly said to have constructed the instrument, disposed its parts, assigned their office, determined their order, action, and mutual dependency, combined their several motions into one result, and that also a result connected with the utilities of other beings. All these properties, therefore, are as much unaccounted for as they were before.

“ Nor is any thing gained by running the difficulty further back, that is, by supposing the watch before us to have been produced from another watch, that from a former, and so on indefinitely. Our going back ever so far brings us no nearer to the least degree of satisfaction upon the subject. Contrivance is still unaccounted for. We still want a contriver. A designing mind is neither supplied by this supposition, nor dispensed with. If the difficulty were diminished the further we went back, by going back indefinitely we might exhaust it. And this is the only case to which this sort of reasoning applies. Where there is a tendency, or, as we increase the number of terms, a continual approach, towards a limit, there, by supposing the number of terms to be what is called infinite, we may conceive the limit to be attained : But where there is no such tendency or approach, nothing is effected by lengthening the series. There is no difference, as to the point in question, (whatever there may be as to many points,) between one series and another ; between a series which is finite, and a series which is infinite. A chain, composed of an infinite number of links, can no more support itself, than a chain composed of a finite number of links. And of this we are assured, (though we never can have tried the experiment,) because, by increasing the number of links, from ten, for instance, to a hundred, from a hundred to a thousand, &c., we make not the smallest approach, we observe not the smallest tendency, towards self-support.* There is no difference in this respect

* See note page 389.

(yet there may be a great difference in several respects) between a chain of a greater or less length, between one chain and another, between one that is finite and one that is indefinite. This very much resembles the case before us. The machine which we are inspecting demonstrates, by its construction, contrivance and design. Contrivance must have had a contriver; design, a designer; whether the machine immediately proceeded from another machine or not. That circumstance alters not the case. That other machine may, in like manner, have proceeded from a former machine: Nor does that alter the case: Contrivance must have had a contriver. That former one from one preceding it; no alteration still; a contriver is still necessary. No tendency is perceived, no approach, towards a diminution of this necessity. It is the same with any and every succession of these machines; a succession of ten, of a hundred, of a thousand; with one series as with another; a series which is finite, as with a series which is infinite. In whatever other respects they may differ, in this they do not. In all equally, contrivance and design are unaccounted for.

“The question is not simply, ‘How came the first watch into existence?’ which question, it may be pretended, is done away by supposing the series of watches thus produced from one another to have been infinite, and, consequently, to have had no such first, for which it was necessary to provide a cause. This, perhaps, would have been nearly the state of the question, if nothing had been before us but an unorganized, unmechanized substance, without mark or indication of contrivance. It might be difficult to show that such substance could not have existed from eternity, either in succession, (if it were possible, which I think it is not, for unorganized bodies to spring from one another,) or by individual perpetuity. But that is not the question now. To suppose it to be so, is to suppose that it made no difference whether we had found a watch or a stone. As it is, the metaphysics of that question have no place; for, in the watch which we are examining are seen contrivance, design; an end, a purpose; means for the end, adaptation to the purpose. And

the question, which irresistibly presses upon our thoughts, is, 'Whence this contrivance and design?' The thing required is the intending mind, the adapting hand, the intelligence by which that hand was directed. This question, this demand, is not shaken off, by increasing a number or succession of substances, destitute of these properties; nor the more, by increasing that number to infinity. If it be said that, upon the supposition of one watch being produced from another in the course of that other's movements, and by means of the mechanism within it, we have a cause for the watch in my hand, namely, the watch from which it proceeded, I deny, that for the design, the contrivance, the suitableness of means to an end, the adaptation of instruments to an use, (all which we discover in the watch,) we have any cause whatever. It is in vain, therefore, to assign a series of such causes, or to allege that a series may be carried back to infinity; for I do not admit that we have yet any cause at all of the phenomena, still less any series of causes either finite or infinite. Here is contrivance, but no contriver; proofs of design, but no designer.

"Our observer would further also reflect, that the maker of the watch before him was, in truth and reality, the maker of every watch produced from it; there being no difference (except that the latter manifests a more exquisite skill) between the making of another watch with his own hands, by the mediation of files, lathes, chisels, &c., and the disposing, fixing, and inserting of these instruments, or of others equivalent to them, in the body of the watch already made, in such a manner, as to form a new watch in the course of the movements which he had given to the old one. It is only working by one set of tools instead of another.

"The conclusion which the first examination of the watch, of its works, construction, and movement, suggested, was, that it must have had, for the cause and author of that construction, an artificer, who understood its mechanism, and designed its use. This conclusion is invincible. A second examination presents us with a new discovery. The watch is found, in the course of its movement, to produce another

watch, similar to itself; and not only so, but we perceive in it a system of organization, separately calculated for that purpose. What effect would this discovery have, or ought it to have, upon our former inference? what, as hath already been said, but to increase, beyond measure, our admiration of the skill which had been employed in the formation of such a machine? Or shall it, instead of this, all at once turn us round to an opposite conclusion, namely, that no art or skill whatever has been concerned in the business, although all other evidences of art and skill remain as they were, and this last and supreme piece of art be now added to the rest? Can this be maintained without absurdity? Yet this is Atheism."

If the argument is so powerful, when a work of art merely is made its basis, it is rendered much more convincing when it is transferred to the works of nature; because ends more singular are, in an infinite number of instances, there proposed, and are accomplished by contrivances much more curious and difficult. In the quotation above given from Howe, the eye, the parts of the body which are double, and the construction of the spine, are adduced among others as striking instances of a contrivance superior to the art of man, and as evidently denoting forethought and plan,—the attributes not of intelligence only, but of an intelligence of an infinitely superior order. These instances have been admirably wrought up by the master-hand which furnished the last quotation.

We begin with the human eye:—

"The contrivances of nature surpass the contrivances of art, in the complexity, subtilty, and curiosity of the mechanism; and still more, if possible, do they go beyond them in number and variety; yet in a multitude of cases, are not less evidently mechanical, not less evidently contrivances, not less evidently accommodated to their end, or suited to their office, than are the most perfect productions of human ingenuity.

"I know no better method of introducing so large a subject, than that of comparing a single thing with a single thing; an eye, for example, with a telescope. As far as the examination of the instrument goes, there is precisely the same proof that

the eye was made for vision, as there is that the telescope was made for assisting it. They are made upon the same principles ; both being adjusted to the laws by which the transmission and refraction of rays of light are regulated. I speak not of the origin of the laws themselves ; but such laws being fixed, the construction, in both cases, is adapted to them. For instance : These laws require, in order to produce the same effect, that the rays of light, in passing from water into the eye, should be refracted by a more convex surface, than when it passes out of air into the eye. Accordingly we find, that the eye of a fish, in that part of it called the crystalline lens, is much rounder than the eye of terrestrial animals. What plainer manifestation of design can there be than this difference ? What could a mathematical-instrument maker have done more, to show his knowledge of his principle, his application of that knowledge, his suiting of his means to his end ; I will not say, to display the compass or excellency of his skill and art, for in these all comparison is indecorous, but to testify counsel, choice, consideration, purpose ?

“ To some it may appear a difference sufficient to destroy all similitude between the eye and the telescope, that the one is a perceiving organ, the other an unperceiving instrument. The fact is, that they are both instruments. And, as to the mechanism, at least as to mechanism being employed, and even as to the kind of it, this circumstance varies not the analogy at all ; for observe what the constitution of the eye is. It is necessary, in order to produce distinct vision, that an image or picture of the object be formed at the bottom of the eye. Whence this necessity arises, or how the picture is connected with the sensation, or contributes to it, it may be difficult, nay, we will confess, if you please, impossible, for us to search out. But the present question is not concerned in the inquiry. It may be true that, in this, and in other instances, we trace mechanical contrivance a certain way ; and that then we come to something which is not mechanical, or which is inscrutable. But this affects not the certainty of our investigation, as far as we have gone. The difference between an animal and an automatic statue consists in this,—that, in

the animal, we trace the mechanism to a certain point, and then we are stopped ; either the mechanism becoming too subtle for our discernment, or something else beside the known laws of mechanism taking place ; whereas, in the automaton, for the comparatively few motions of which it is capable, we trace the mechanism throughout. But, up to the limit, the reasoning is as clear and certain in the one case as the other. In the example before us, it is a matter of certainty, because it is a matter which experience and observation demonstrate, that the formation of an image at the bottom of the eye is necessary to perfect vision. The image itself can be shown. Whatever affects the distinctness of the image, affects the distinctness of the vision. The formation then of such an image being necessary (no matter how) to the sense of sight, and to the exercise of that sense, the apparatus by which it is formed is constructed and put together, not only with infinitely more art, but upon the self-same principles of art, as in the telescope or camera obscura. The perception arising from the image may be laid out of the question ; for the production of the image, these are instruments of the same kind. The end is the same ; the means are the same. The purpose in both is alike ; the contrivance for accomplishing that purpose is in both alike. The lenses of the telescope, and the humours of the eye, bear a complete resemblance to one another, in their figure, their position, and in their power over the rays of light, namely, in bringing each pencil to a point at the right distance from the lens ; namely, in the eye, at the exact place where the membrane is spread to receive it. How is it possible, under circumstances of such close affinity, and under the operation of an equal evidence, to exclude contrivance from the one ; yet to acknowledge the proof of contrivance having been employed, as the plainest and clearest of all propositions, in the other ?

“ The resemblance between the two cases is still more accurate, and obtains in more points than we have yet represented, or than we are, on the first view of the subject, aware of. In dioptric telescopes there is an imperfection of this nature. Pencils of light, in passing through glass lenses, are separated

into different colours, thereby tinging the object, especially the edges of it, as if it were viewed through a prism. To correct this inconvenience had been long a desideratum in the art. At last it came into the mind of a sagacious optician, to inquire how this matter was managed in the eye ; in which there was exactly the same difficulty to contend with as in the telescope. His observation taught him, that, in the eye, the evil was cured by combining together lenses composed of different substances, that is, of substances which possessed different refracting powers. Our artist borrowed from thence his hint ; and produced a correction of the defect by imitating, in glasses made from different materials, the effects of the different humours through which the rays of light pass before they reach the bottom of the eye. Could this be in the eye without purpose, which suggested to the optician the only effectual means of attaining that purpose ?

“But further : There are other points, not so much perhaps of strict resemblance between the two, as of superiority of the eye over the telescope ; yet, of a superiority which, being founded in the laws that regulate both, may furnish topics of fair and just comparison. Two things were wanted to the eye, which were not wanted, at least in the same degree, to the telescope ; and these were, the adaptation of the organ, first, to different degrees of light ; and, secondly, to the vast diversity of distance at which objects are viewed by the naked eye, namely, from a few inches to as many miles. These difficulties present not themselves to the maker of the telescope. He wants all the light he can get ; and he never directs his instrument to objects near at hand. In the eye, both these cases were to be provided for ; and, for the purpose of providing for them, a subtile and appropriate mechanism is introduced.

“In order to exclude excess of light, when it is excessive, and to render objects visible under obscurer degrees of it, when no more can be had, the hole or aperture in the eye, through which the light enters, is so formed, as to contract or dilate itself for the purpose of admitting a greater or less number of rays at the same time. The chamber of the eye is a camera

obscura, which, when the light is too small, can enlarge its opening ; when too strong, can again contract it ; and that without any other assistance than that of its own exquisite machinery. It is further also, in the human subject, to be observed, that this hole in the eye, which we call the pupil, under all its different dimensions, retains its exact circular shape. This is a structure extremely artificial. Let an artist only try to execute the same. He will find that his threads and strings must be disposed with great consideration and contrivance, to make a circle, which shall continually change its diameter, yet preserve its form. This is done in the eye by an application of fibres, that is, of strings, similar, in their position and action, to what an artist would and must employ, if he had the same piece of workmanship to perform.

“ The second difficulty which has been stated was the suiting of the same organ to the perception of objects that lie near at hand, within a few inches, we will suppose, of the eye, and of objects which were placed at a considerable distance from it, that, for example, of as many furlongs : (I speak in both cases of the distance at which distinct vision can be exercised :) Now this, according to the principles of optics, that is, according to the laws by which the transmission of light is regulated, (and these laws are fixed,) could not be done without the organ itself undergoing an alteration, and receiving an adjustment, that might correspond with the exigency of the case, that is to say, with the different inclination to one another under which the rays of light reached it. Rays issuing from points placed at a small distance from the eye, and which consequently must enter the eye in a spreading or diverging order, cannot, by the same optical instrument in the same state, be brought to a point, that is, be made to form an image, in the same place with rays proceeding from objects situated at a much greater distance, and which rays arrive at the eye in directions nearly, and physically speaking, parallel. It requires a rounder lens to do it. The point of concurrence behind the lens must fall critically upon the retina, or the vision is confused ; yet, other things remaining the same, this point, by the immutable properties of light, is carried further back when

the rays proceed from a near object, than when they are sent from one that is remote. A person who was using an optical instrument would manage this matter by changing, as the occasion required, his lens or his telescope; or by adjusting the distances of his glasses with his hand or his screw; but how is it to be managed in the eye? What the alteration was, or in what part of the eye it took place, or by what means it was effected, (for, if the known laws which govern the refraction of light be maintained, some alteration in the state of the organ there must be,) had long formed a subject of inquiry and conjecture. The change, though sufficient for the purpose, is so minute as to elude ordinary observation. Some very late discoveries, deduced from a laborious and most accurate inspection of the structure and operation of the organ, seem at length to have ascertained the mechanical alteration which the parts of the eye undergo. It is found, that, by the action of certain muscles, called the 'straight muscles,' and which action is the most advantageous that could be imagined for the purpose,—it is found, I say, that, whenever the eye is directed to a near object, three changes are produced in it at the same time, all severally contributing to the adjustment required. The cornea, or outermost coat of the eye, is rendered more round and prominent; the crystalline lens underneath is pushed forward; and the axis of vision, as the depth of the eye is called, is elongated. These changes in the eye vary its power over the rays of light in such a manner and degree as to produce exactly the effect which is wanted, namely, the formation of an image upon the retina, whether the rays come to the eye in a state of divergency, which is the case when the object is near to the eye, or come parallel to one another, which is the case when the object is placed at a distance. Can any thing be more decisive of contrivance than this is? The most secret laws of optics must have been known to the author of a structure endowed with such a capacity of change. It is as though an optician, when he had a near object to view, should rectify his instrument by putting in another glass, at the same time drawing out also his tube to a different length.

“In considering vision as achieved by the means of an image

formed at the bottom of the eye, we can never reflect without wonder upon the smallness, yet correctness, of the picture, the subtlety of the touch, the fineness of the lines. A landscape of five or six square leagues is brought into a space of half an inch diameter; yet the multitude of objects which it contains are all preserved; are all discriminated in their magnitudes, positions, figures, colours. The prospect from Hampstead-Hill is compressed into the compass of a sixpence, yet circumstantially represented. A stage-coach, travelling at its ordinary speed for half an hour, passes, in the eye, only over one-twelfth of an inch, yet is this change of place in the image distinctly perceived throughout its whole progress; for it is only by means of that perception that the motion of the coach itself is made sensible to the eye. If any thing can abate our admiration of the smallness of the visual tablet, compared with the extent of vision, it is a reflection which the *view* of nature leads us, every hour, to make, namely, that in the hands of the Creator, great and little are nothing."

On the parts of the body which are double, adduced by Howe, as proofs of contrivance, our author further remarks:—

"The human, or indeed the animal frame, considered as a mass or assemblage, exhibits in its composition three properties, which have long struck my mind, as indubitable evidences, not only of design, but of a great deal of attention and accuracy in prosecuting the design.

"The first is, the exact correspondency of the two sides of the same animal; the right hand answering to the left, leg to leg, eye to eye, one side of the countenance to the other; and with a precision, to imitate which in any tolerable degree forms one of the difficulties of statuary, and requires, on the part of the artist, a constant attention to this property of his work, distinct from every other.

"It is the most difficult thing that can be, to get a wig made even; yet how seldom is the face awry? And what care is taken that it should not be so, the anatomy of its bones demonstrates. The upper part of the face is composed of thirteen bones, six on each side, answering each to each, and the thirteenth, without a fellow, in the middle; the lower part

of the face is in like manner composed of six bones, three on each side, respectively corresponding, and the lower jaw in the centre. In building an arch, could more be done in order to make the curve true, that is, the parts equi-distant from the middle, alike in figure and position ?

“The exact resemblance of the eyes, considering how compounded this organ is in its structure, how various and how delicate are the shades of colour with which its iris is tinged, how differently, as to effect upon appearance, the eye may be mounted in its socket, and how differently in different heads eyes actually are set, is a property of animal bodies much to be admired. Of ten thousand eyes, I do not know that it would be possible to match one, except with its own fellow ; or to distribute them into suitable pairs by any other selection than that which obtains.

“The next circumstance to be remarked is, that, whilst the cavities of the body are so configured as, externally, to exhibit the most exact correspondency of the opposite sides, the contents of these cavities have no such correspondency. A line drawn down the middle of the breast divides the thorax into two sides, exactly similar ; yet these two sides inclose very different contents. The heart lies on the left side ; a lobe of the lungs on the right ; balancing each other neither in size nor shape. The same thing holds of the abdomen : The liver lies on the right side, without any similar viscus opposed to it on the left. The spleen, indeed, is situated over against the liver, but agreeing with the liver neither in bulk nor form ; there is no equipollency between these. The stomach is a vessel both irregular in its shape, and oblique in its position ; the foldings and doublings of the intestines do not present a parity of sides. Yet that symmetry which depends upon the correlation of the sides is externally preserved throughout the whole trunk ; and is the more remarkable in the lower parts of it, as the integuments are soft, and the shape, consequently, is not, as the thorax is by its ribs, reduced by natural stays. It is evident, therefore, that the external proportion does not arise from any equality in the shape or pressure of the internal contents. What is it, indeed,

but a correction of inequalities? an adjustment, by mutual compensation, of anomalous forms into a regular congeries? the effect, in a word, of artful and, if we might be permitted so to speak, of studied collocation?

“ Similar, also, to this, is the third observation,—than an internal inequality in the feeding vessels is so managed as to produce no inequality in parts which were intended to correspond. The right arm answers accurately to the left, both in size and shape; but the arterial branches, which supply the two arms, do not go off from their trunk in a pair, in the same manner, at the same place, or at the same angle: Under which want of similitude it is very difficult to conceive how the same quantity of blood should be pushed through each artery; yet the result is right; the two limbs which are nourished by them perceive no difference of supply, no effects of excess or deficiency.

“ Concerning the difference of manner in which the subclavian and carotid arteries, upon the different sides of the body, separate themselves from the aorta, Cheselden seems to have thought, that the advantage which the left gain by going off at a much acuter angle than the right, is made up to the right by their going off together in one branch. It is very possible that this may be the compensating contrivance; and if it be so, how curious! how hydrostatical!”

The construction of the spine, another of Howe’s illustrations, is thus exemplified:—

“ The spine, or back-bone, is a chain of joints of very wonderful construction. Various, difficult, and almost inconsistent offices were to be executed by the same instrument. It was to be firm, yet flexible: Now, I know of no chain made by art which is both these; for by ‘firmness’ I mean not only strength, but stability; firm to support the erect position of the body; flexible to allow of the bending of the trunk in all degrees of curvature. It was further, also,—which is another and quite a distinct purpose from the rest,—to become a pipe or conduit for the safe conveyance from the brain of the most important fluid of the animal frame, that, namely, upon which all voluntary motion depends,—the spinal marrow; a substance

not only of the first necessity to action, if not to life, but of a nature so delicate and tender, so susceptible and so impatient of injury, as that any unusual pressure upon it, or any considerable obstruction of its course, is followed by paralysis or death. Now, the spine was not only to furnish the main trunk for the passage of the medullary substance from the brain, but to give out, in the course of its progress, small pipes therefrom, which, being afterwards indefinitely subdivided, might, under the name of 'nerves,' distribute this exquisite supply to every part of the body. The same spine was also to serve another use, not less wanted than the preceding, namely, to afford a fulcrum, stay, or basis, or, more properly speaking, a series of these, for the insertion of the muscles which are spread over the trunk of the body; in which trunk there are not, as in the limbs, cylindrical bones, to which they can be fastened: And likewise, which is a similar use, to furnish a support for the ends of the ribs to rest upon.

"Bespeak of a workman a piece of mechanism which shall comprise all these purposes, and let him set about to contrive it; let him try his skill upon it; let him feel the difficulty of accomplishing the task before he be told how the same thing is effected in the animal frame. Nothing will enable him to judge so well of the wisdom which has been employed; nothing will dispose him to think of it so truly. First, for the firmness yet flexibility of the spine; it is composed of a great number of bones, (in the human subject of twenty-four,) joined to one another, and compacted together by broad bases. The breadth of the bases upon which the parts severally rest, and the closeness of the junction, give to the chain its firmness and stability; the number of parts, and consequent frequency of joints, its flexibility: Which flexibility, we may also observe, varies in different parts of the chain; is least in the back, where strength more than flexure is wanted; greater in the loins, which it was necessary should be more supple than the back; and the greatest of all in the neck, for the free motion of the head. Then, secondly, in order to afford a passage for the descent of the medullary substance, each of these bones is bored through in the middle, in such a manner as that,

when put together, the hole in one bone falls into a line, and corresponds with the holes in the two bones contiguous to it; by which means the perforated pieces, when joined, form an entire, close, uninterrupted channel; at least whilst the spine is upright and at rest. But as a settled posture is inconsistent with its use, a great difficulty still remained, which was to prevent the vertebræ shifting upon one another, so as to break the line of the canal as often as the body moves or twists; or the joints gaping externally whenever the body is bent forward, and the spine thereupon made to take the form of a bow. These dangers, which are mechanical, are mechanically provided against. The vertebræ, by means of their processes and projections, and of the articulations which some of these form with one another at their extremities, are so locked in and confined, as to maintain, in what are called the bodies or broad surfaces of the bones, the relative position nearly unaltered; and to throw the change and the pressure produced by flexion almost entirely upon the intervening cartilages, the springiness and yielding nature of whose substance admits of all the motion which is necessary to be performed upon them, without any chasm being produced by a separation of the parts: I say, of all the motion which is necessary; for although we bend our backs to every degree almost of inclination, the motion of each vertebra is very small; such is the advantage which we receive from the chain being composed of so many links, the spine of so many bones. Had it consisted of three or four bones only, in bending the body the spinal marrow must have been bruised at every angle. The reader need not be told that these intervening cartilages are gristles; and he may see them in perfection in a loin of veal. Their form, also, favours the same intention: They are thicker before than behind; so that when we stoop forward, the compressible substance of the cartilage, yielding in its thicker and anterior part to the force which squeezes it, brings the surfaces of the adjoining vertebræ nearer to the being parallel with one another than they were before, instead of increasing the inclination of their planes, which must have occasioned a fissure or opening between them. Thirdly. For the medullary canal giving

out in its course, and in a convenient order, a supply of nerves to different parts of the body, notches are made in the upper and lower edge of every vertebra ; two on each edge, equidistant on each side from the middle line of the back. When the vertebræ are put together, these notches, exactly fitting, form small holes, through which the nerves, at each articulation, issue out in pairs, in order to send their branches to every part of the body, and with an equal bounty to both sides of the body. The fourth purpose assigned to the same instrument, is the insertion of the bases of the muscles and the support of the ends of the ribs ; and for this fourth purpose, especially the former part of it, a figure specifically suited to the design, and unnecessary for the other purposes, is given to the constituent bones. Whilst they are plain, and round, and smooth towards the front, where any roughness or projection might have wounded the adjacent viscera, they run out behind, and on each side, into long processes, to which processes the muscles necessary to the motions of the trunk are fixed ; and fixed with such art, that, whilst the vertebræ supply a basis for the muscles, the muscles help to keep these bones in their position, or, by their tendons, to tie them together.

“ That most important, however, and general property, namely, the strength of the compages, and the security against luxation, was to be still more specially consulted ; for where so many joints were concerned, and where, in every one, derangement would have been fatal, it became a subject of studious precaution. For this purpose the vertebræ are articulated, that is, the movable joints between them are formed by means of those projections of their substance which we have mentioned under the name of ‘ processes ; ’ and these so lock in with, and overwrap, one another, as to secure the body of the vertebræ, not only from accidentally slipping, but even from being pushed out of its place by any violence short of that which would break the bone.”

Instances of design and wonderful contrivance are as numerous as there are organized bodies in nature, and as there are relations between bodies which are not organized. The subject is, therefore, inexhaustible. The cases stated are suffi-

cient for the illustration of this species of argument for the existence of an intelligent First Cause. Many others are given with great force and interest in the *Natural Theology* of Paley, from which the above quotations have been made; but his chapter on the personality of the Deity contains applications of the argument from design too important to be overlooked. The same course of reasoning may be traced in many other writers, but by none has it been expressed with so much clearness and felicity.

“ Contrivance, if established, appears to me to prove every thing which we wish to prove. Amongst other things, it proves the personality of the Deity, as distinguished from what is sometimes called ‘ nature,’ sometimes called ‘ a principle;’ which terms, in the mouths of those who use them philosophically, seem to be intended, to admit and to express an efficacy, but to exclude and to deny a personal agent. Now that which can contrive, which can design, must be a person. These capacities constitute personality, for they imply consciousness and thought. They require that which can perceive an end or purpose; as well as the power of providing means, and of directing them to their end. They require a centre in which perceptions unite, and from which volitions flow; which is mind. The acts of a mind prove the existence of a mind; and in whatever a mind resides, is a person.

“ Of this we are certain, that, whatever the Deity be, neither the universe, nor any part of it which we see, can be he. The universe itself is merely a collective name: Its parts are all which are real, or which are things. Now inert matter is out of the question; and organized substances include marks of contrivance. But whatever includes marks of contrivance, whatever, in its constitution, testifies design, necessarily carries us to something beyond itself, to some other being, to a designer prior to, and out of, itself. No animal, for instance, can have contrived its own limbs and senses; can have been the author to itself of the design with which they were constructed. That supposition involves all the absurdity of self-creation, that is, of acting without existing. Nothing can be God which is ordered by a wisdom and a will which

itself is void of; which is indebted for any of its properties to contrivance *ab extra*. The not having that in his nature which requires the exertion of another prior being, (which property is sometimes called 'self-sufficiency,' and sometimes 'self-comprehension,') appertains to the Deity, as his essential distinction, and removes his nature from that of all things which we see. Which consideration contains the answer to a question that has sometimes been asked, namely, Why, since something or other must have existed from eternity, may not the present universe be that something? The contrivance, perceived in it, proves that to be impossible. Nothing contrived can, in a strict and proper sense, be eternal, forasmuch as the contriver must have existed before the contrivance.

"We have already noticed, and we must here notice again, the misapplication of the term 'law,' and the mistake concerning the idea which that term expresses in physics, whenever such idea is made to take the place of power, and still more of an intelligent power, and, as such, to be assigned for the cause of any thing, or of any property of any thing, that exists. This is what we are secretly apt to do when we speak of organized bodies (plants, for instance, or animals) owing their production, their form, their growth, their qualities, their beauty, their use, to any law or laws of nature; and when we are contented to sit down with that answer to our inquiries concerning them. I say once more, that it is a perversion of language to assign any law, as the efficient operative cause of any thing. A law presupposes an agent, for it is only the mode according to which an agent proceeds; it implies a power, for it is the order according to which that power acts. Without this agent, without this power, which are both distinct from itself, the 'law' does nothing; is nothing.

"What has been said concerning 'law,' holds true of mechanism. Mechanism is not itself power. Mechanism without power can do nothing. Let a watch be contrived and constructed ever so ingeniously; be its parts ever so many, ever so complicated, ever so finely wrought or artificially put together, it cannot go without a weight or spring, that is, without a force independent of, and ulterior to, its mechanism.

The spring, acting at the centre, will produce different motions and different results, according to the variety of the intermediate mechanism. One and the self-same spring, acting in one and the same manner, namely, by simply expanding itself, may be the cause of a hundred different and all useful movements, if a hundred different and well-devised sets of wheels be placed between it and the final effect,—for instance, may point out the hour of the day, the day of the month, the age of the moon, the position of the planets, the cycle of the years, and many other serviceable notices ; and these movements may fulfil their purposes with more or less perfection, according as the mechanism is better or worse contrived, or better or worse executed, or in a better or worse state of repair ; but, in all cases, it is necessary that the spring act at the centre. The course of our reasoning upon such a subject would be this : By inspecting the watch, even when standing still, we get a proof of contrivance, and of a contriving mind, having been employed about it. In the form and obvious relation of its parts we see enough to convince us of this. If we pull the works in pieces, for the purpose of a closer examination, we are still more fully convinced. But when we see the watch going, we see proof of another point, namely, that there is a power somewhere, and somehow or other, applied to it ; a power in action ; that there is more in the subject than the mere wheels of the machine ; that there is a secret spring, or a gravitating plummet ; in a word, that there is force and energy, as well as mechanism.

“ So, then, the watch in motion establishes to the observer two conclusions : One, that thought, contrivance, and design have been employed in the forming, proportioning, and arranging of its parts ; and that, whoever or wherever he be, or were, such a contriver there is, or was ; the other, that force or power, distinct from mechanism, is, at this present time, acting upon it. If I saw a hand-mill, even at rest, I should see contrivance ; but if I saw it grinding, I should be assured that a hand was at the windlass, though in another room. It is the same in nature. In the works of nature we trace mechanism ; and this alone proves contrivance ; but living, active, moving,

productive nature, proves also the exertion of a power at the centre ; for wherever the power resides may be denominated 'the centre.'

"The intervention and disposition of what are called 'second causes' fall under the same observation. This disposition is or is not mechanism, according as we can or cannot trace it by our senses, and means of examination. That is all the difference there is ; and it is a difference which respects our faculties, not the things themselves. Now, where the order of second causes is mechanical, what is here said of mechanism strictly applies to it. But it would be always mechanism, (natural chymistry, for instance, would be mechanism,) if our senses were acute enough to descry it. Neither mechanism, therefore, in the works of nature, nor the intervention of what are called 'second causes,' (for I think that they are the same thing,) excuses the necessity of an agent distinct from both.

"If, in tracing these causes, it be said, that we find certain general properties of matter, which have nothing in them that bespeaks intelligence, I answer that, still, the managing of these properties, the pointing and directing them to the uses which we see made of them, demands intelligence in the highest degree. For example, suppose animal secretions to be elective attractions, and that such and such attractions universally belong to such and such substances ; in all which there is no intellect concerned ; still the choice and collocation of these substances, the fixing upon right substances and disposing them in right places, must be an act of intelligence. What mischief would follow, were there a single transposition of the secretory organs ; a single mistake in arranging the glands which compose them !

"There may be many second causes, and many courses of second causes, one behind another, between what we observe of nature, and the Deity ; but there must be intelligence somewhere ; there must be more in nature than what we see ; and amongst the things unseen, there must be an intelligent, designing author. The philosopher beholds with astonishment the production of things around him. Unconscious particles

of matter take their stations, and severally range themselves in an order, so as to become collectively plants or animals, that is, organized bodies, with parts bearing strict and evident relation to one another, and to the utility of the whole: And it should seem that these particles could not move in any other way than as they do; for they testify not the smallest sign of choice, or liberty, or discretion. There may be particular intelligent beings guiding these motions in each case; or they may be the result of trains of mechanical dispositions, fixed beforehand by an intelligent appointment, and kept in action by a power at the centre. But, in either case, there must be intelligence."

The above arguments, as they irresistibly confirm the Scripture doctrine of the existence of an intelligent First Cause, expose the extreme folly and absurdity of Atheism. The first of the leading theories which it has assumed is the eternity of matter. When this means the eternity of the world in its present form and constitution, it is contradicted by the changes which are actually, and every moment, taking place in it; and, as above argued, by the contrivance which it every where presents, and which, it has been proved, necessarily supposes that designing intelligence, whom we call "God." When it means the eternity of unorganized matter only, the subject that has received those various forms and orderly arrangements which imply contrivance and final causes, it leaves untouched the question of an intelligent cause, the author of the forms with which it has been impressed. A creative cause may, and must, nevertheless, exist; and this was the opinion of many of the ancient theistical philosophers, who ascribed eternity both to God and to matter; and considered creation, not as the bringing of something out of nothing, but as the framing of what actually existed without order and without end. But though this tenet was held, in conjunction with a belief in the Deity, by many who had not the light of the Scripture revelation; yet its manifest tendency is to Atheism, because it supposes the impossibility of creation in the absolute sense; and thus produces limited notions of God, from which the transition to an entire denial of him is an easy step. In

modern times, therefore, the opinion of the eternity of matter has been held by few but absolute Atheists.

What seems to have led to the notion of a pre-existent and eternal matter out of which the world was formed, was the supposed impossibility of a creation from nothing, according to the maxim, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. The philosophy was, however, bad ; because as no contradiction was implied in thus ascribing to God the power to create out of nothing, it was a matter of choice, whether to allow what was merely not comprehensible by man, or to put limitations without reason to the power of God. Thus Cudworth :—

“ Because it is undeniably certain, concerning ourselves and all imperfect beings, that none of these can create any new substance, men are apt to measure all things by their own scantling, and to suppose it universally impossible for any power whatever thus to create. But since it is certain, that imperfect beings can themselves produce some things out of nothing pre-existing, as new cogitations, new local motion, and new modifications of things corporeal, it is surely reasonable to think that an absolutely perfect being can do something more, that is, create new substances, or give them their whole being. And it may well be thought as easy for God, or an omnipotent being, to make a whole world, matter and all, *εξ οκ οντων*, as it is for us to create a thought or to move a finger, or for the sun to send out rays, or a candle light, or lastly, for an opaque body to produce an image of itself in a glass or water, or to project a shadow ; all these imperfect things being but the energies, rays, images, or shadows, of the Deity. For a substance to be made out of nothing by God, or a being infinitely perfect, is not for it to be made out of nothing in the impossible sense, because it comes from Him who is all. Nor can it be said to be impossible for any thing whatever to be made by that which hath not only infinitely greater perfection, but also infinite active power. It is indeed true, that infinite power itself cannot do things in their own nature impossible ; and, therefore, those who deny creation ought to prove that it is absolutely impossible for a substance, though not for an accident or modification, to be

brought from non-existence into being. But nothing is in itself impossible, which does not imply a contradiction ; and though it be a contradiction for a thing to be and not to be at the same time, there is surely no contradiction in conceiving an imperfect being, which before was not, afterwards to be."

It is not necessary to refer to the usual metaphysical arguments to show the non-eternity of matter, by proving that its existence must be necessary if it be eternal ; and, if necessary, that it must be infinite, &c. They are not of much value. Every man bears in himself the proof of a creation out of nothing, so that the objection from the impossibility of the thing is at once removed.

" That sensation, intelligence, consciousness, and volition, are not the result of any modifications of figure and motion, is a truth as evident as that consciousness is not swift, nor volition square. If then these be the powers or properties of a being distinct from matter, which we think capable of the completest proof, every man who does not believe that his mind has existed and been conscious from eternity, must be convinced that the power of creation has been exerted on himself. If it be denied that there is any immaterial substance in man, still it must be confessed, that, as matter is not essentially conscious, and cannot be made so by any particular organization, there is some real thing or entity, call it what you please, which has either existed and been conscious from eternity, or been in time brought from nonentity into existence by an exertion of infinite power."

The former no sober person will contend for, and the latter therefore must be admitted.

On these grounds the absurdity of Atheism is manifest. If it attributes the various arrangements of material things to chance, that is, to nothing, it rests in design without a designer ; in effects without a cause. If it allow an intelligent cause operating to produce these effects, but denies him to be almighty, by ascribing eternity to matter, and placing its creation beyond his power, it acknowledges with us indeed a god, but makes him an imperfect being, limited in his power ;

and it chooses to acknowledge this limited and imperfect being, not only without reason, (for we have just seen that creation out of nothing implies no contradiction,) but even against reason; for the acknowledgment of a creation out of nothing must be forced from him by his own experience, unless he will contend that that conscious being himself may have existed from eternity without being conscious of existence, except for the space of a few past years.

On some modern schemes of Atheism, Paley justly remarks :—

“ I much doubt, whether the new schemes have advanced any thing upon the old, or done more than changed the terms of the nomenclature. For instance: I could never see the difference between the antiquated system of atoms and Buffon’s organic molecules. This philosopher, having made a planet by knocking off from the sun a piece of melted glass, in consequence of the stroke of a comet; and having set it in motion by the same stroke, both round its own axis and the sun, finds his next difficulty to be, how to bring plants and animals upon it. In order to solve this difficulty, we are to suppose the universe replenished with particles endowed with life, but without organization or senses of their own; and endowed also with a tendency to marshal themselves into organized forms. The concourse of these particles, by virtue of this tendency, but without intelligence, will, or direction, (for I do not find that any of these qualities are ascribed to them,) has produced the living forms which we now see.

“ Very few of the conjectures, which philosophers hazard upon these subjects, have more of pretension in them, than the challenging you to show the direct impossibility of the hypothesis. In the present example there seemed to be a positive objection to the whole scheme upon the very face of it; which was that, if the case were as here represented, new combinations ought to be perpetually taking place; new plants and animals, or organized bodies which were neither, ought to be starting up before our eyes every day. For this, however, our philosopher has an answer: Whilst so many forms of plants and animals are already in existence, and,

consequently, so many 'internal moulds,' as he calls them, are prepared and at hand, the organic particles run into these moulds, and are employed in supplying an accession of substance to them, as well for their growth, as for their propagation. By which means, things keep their ancient course. But, says the same philosopher, should any general loss or destruction of the present constitution of organized bodies take place, the particles, for want of 'moulds' into which they might enter, would run into different combinations, and replenish the waste with new species of organized substances.

"Is there any history to countenance this notion? Is it known, that any destruction has been so repaired? any desert thus re-peopled?"

"But, these wonder-working instruments, these 'internal moulds,' what are they after all? what, when examined, but a name without signification; unintelligible, if not self-contradictory; at the best, differing in nothing from the 'essential forms' of the Greek philosophy? One short sentence of Buffon's works exhibits his scheme as follows: 'When this nutritious and prolific matter, which is diffused throughout all nature, passes through the internal mould of an animal or vegetable, and finds a proper matrix, or receptacle, it gives rise to an animal or vegetable of the same species.' Does any reader annex a meaning to the expression 'internal mould,' in this sentence? Ought it then to be said, that though we have little notion of an 'internal mould,' we have not much more of a designing mind? The very contrary of this assertion is the truth. When we speak of an artificer or an architect, we talk of what is comprehensible to our understanding, and familiar to our experience. We use no other terms, than what refer us for their meaning to our consciousness and observation; what express the constant objects of both; whereas names, like that we have mentioned, refer us to nothing; excite no idea; convey a sound to the ear, but, I think, do no more.

"Another system, which has lately been brought forward, and with much ingenuity, is that of appetencies. The principle, and the short account, of the theory is this: Pieces

of soft, ductile matter, being endued with propensities or appetencies for particular actions, would, by continual endeavours, carried on through a long series of generations, work themselves gradually into suitable forms; and at length acquire, though perhaps by obscure and almost imperceptible improvements, an organization fitted to the action which their respective propensities led them to exert. A piece of animated matter, for example, that was endued with a propensity to fly, though ever so shapeless, though no other we will suppose than a round ball, to begin with, would, in a course of ages, if not in a million of years, perhaps in a hundred million of years, (for our theorists, having eternity to dispose of, are never sparing in time,) acquire wings. The same tendency to locomotion in an aquatic animal, or rather in an animated lump which might happen to be surrounded by water, would end in the production of fins; in a living substance, confined to the solid earth, would put out legs and feet; or, if it took a different turn, would break the body into ringlets, and conclude by crawling upon the ground.

“The scheme under consideration is open to the same objection with other conjectures of a similar tendency, namely, a total defect of evidence. No changes like those which the theory requires have ever been observed. All the changes in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* might have been effected by these appetencies, if the theory were true; yet not an example, nor the pretence of an example, is offered of a single change being known to have taken place.

“The solution, when applied to the works of nature generally, is contradicted by many of the phenomena, and totally inadequate to others. The ligaments or strictures by which the tendons are tied down at the angles of the joints, could by no possibility be formed by the motion or exercise of the tendons themselves, by any appetency exciting these parts into action, or by any tendency arising therefrom. The tendency is all the other way; the *conatus*, in constant opposition to them. Length of time does not help the case at all, but the reverse. The valves, also, in the blood-vessels could never be formed in the manner which our theorist proposes.

The blood, in its right and natural course, has no tendency to form them ; when obstructed or reflux, it has the contrary. These parts could not grow out of their use, though they had eternity to grow in.

“ The senses of animals appear to me altogether incapable of receiving the explanation of their origin which this theory affords. Including under the word ‘ sense ’ the organ and the perception, we have no account of either. How will our philosopher get at vision, or make an eye ? How should the blind animal affect sight ; of which blind animals, we know, have neither conception nor desire ? Affecting it, by what operation of its will, by what endeavour to see, could it so determine the fluids of its body, as to inchoate the formation of an eye ? Or, suppose the eye formed, would the perception follow ? The same of the other senses. And this objection holds its force, ascribe what you will to the hand of time, to the power of habit, to changes too slow to be observed by man, or brought within any comparison which he is able to make of past things with the present ; concede what you please to these arbitrary and unattested suppositions, how will they help you ? Here is no inception. No laws, no course, no powers of nature which prevail at present, nor any analogous to these, could give commencement to a new sense. And it is in vain to inquire how that might proceed which could never begin.

“ In the last place ; what do these appetencies mean when applied to plants ? I am not able to give a signification to the term which can be transferred from animals to plants, or which is common to both. Yet a no less successful organization is found in plants than what obtains in animals. A solution is wanted for one as well as the other.

“ Upon the whole, after all the schemes and struggles of a reluctant philosophy, the necessary resort is a Deity. The marks of design are too strong to be got over ; design must have had a designer ; that designer must have been a person ; that person is God.”

Well has it been said that Atheism is, in all its theories, credulity of the grossest kind, equally degrading to the under

standing and to the heart : For what reflecting and honest mind can, for a moment, put these theories into competition with that revealed in the Scriptures, at once so sublime and so convincing ; and which, instead of shunning, like those just mentioned, an appeal to facts, bids us look to the heavens and to the earth, assemble the aggregate of beings, great and small, and examine their structure, and mark their relations, in proof that there must exist an all-wise and an almighty Creator ?

Such is the evidence which the doctrine of a Deity receives from experience, observation, and rational induction, *à posteriori*. The argument thus stated has an overwhelming force, and certainly needs no other, though attempts have been made to obtain proof *à priori*, and thus to meet and rout the forces of the enemy in both directions. No instance is, however, I believe on record of an atheistic conversion having been produced by this process ; and it may be ranked among the over-zealous attempts of the advocates of truth. It is well intentioned, but unsatisfactory ; and—so far as, on the one hand, it has led to a neglect of the more convincing and powerful course of argument drawn from “ the things which do appear ; ” and, on the other, has encouraged a dependence upon a mode of investigation to which the human mind is inadequate, which, in many instances, is an utter mental delusion, and which scarcely two minds will conduct in the same manner—it has probably been mischievous in its effects, by inducing a scepticism not arising out of the nature of the case, but, from the imperfect and unsatisfactory investigations of the human understanding, pushed beyond the limit of its powers. In most instances it is a sword which cuts two ways ; and the mere imaginary assumptions of those who think they have found out a new way to demonstrate truth have, in many instances, either done disservice to it by absurdity, or yielded principles which unbelievers have connected with the most injurious conclusions. We need only instance the doctrine of the necessary existence of the Deity when reasoned *à priori*. Some acute infidels have thanked those for the discovery who intended nothing so little as to encourage error ; and have

argued, from that notion, that the supreme Being cannot be a free agent, and thus have set the first principles of religion at variance with the Scriptures. The fact seems to be, that though, when once the existence of a first and intelligent Cause is established; some of his attributes are capable of proof *à priori*, (how much that proof is worth, is another question,) yet that his existence itself admits of no such demonstration; and that, in the nature of the thing, it is impossible.

The reason of this is drawn from the very nature of an argument *à priori*. It is an argument from an antecedent to a consequent, from cause to effect. If, therefore, there be any thing existing in nature, or could have been, from which the being and attributes of God might have been derived, or any thing which can be justly considered as prior, in order of nature or conception, to the First Cause of all things, then may the argument from such prior thing or principle be good and valid. But if there is, in reality, nothing prior to the being of God, considered as the first cause and causality, nothing in nature, nothing in reason, then the attempt is fruitless to argue from it; and we improperly pretend to search into the grounds or reasons of the First Cause, of whom, antecedently, we neither do nor can know any thing.

As the force of the argument *à priori* has, however, been much debated, it may not be useless to enter somewhat more fully into the subject.

One of the earliest and ablest advocates of this mode of demonstrating the existence of God, was Dr. Samuel Clarke. He, however, first proceeds, *à posteriori*, to prove, from the actual existence of dependent beings, the existence, from eternity, of "one unchangeable and independent Being;" and thus makes himself debtor to this obvious and plain demonstration before he can prove that this being is, in his sense, necessarily existent. Necessity of existence is, therefore, tacitly acknowledged not to be a tangible idea in the first instance; and the weight of the proof is tacitly confessed to rest upon the argument from effect to cause; which, if admitted, needs no assistance from a more abstract course of

arguing ; for if the first argument be allowed, every thing else follows ; and it must be allowed before the higher ground of demonstration can be taken. We have seen the guarded manner in which Howe, in the quotation before given, has stated the notion of the necessary existence of the divine Being. Dr. S. Clarke and his followers have refined upon this, and given a view of the subject which is liable to the strongest objections : His words are, “ To be self-existent is to exist by an absolute necessity, originally in the nature of the thing itself ; ” and “ this necessity must not be barely consequent upon our supposition of the existence of such a being, for then it would not be a necessity absolutely such in itself, nor be the ground or foundation of the existence of any thing, being, on the contrary, only a consequent of it ; but it must antecedently force itself upon us whether we will or not, even when we are endeavouring to suppose that no such being exists.”*

One of the reasons given for this opinion is, “ There must be in nature a permanent ground or reason for the existence of the First Cause, otherwise its being would be owing to mere chance.” But to this it has been well replied, “ Why must we say that God has his existence from, or that he does exist for, some prior cause or reason ? Why may we not say that God exists as the First Cause of all things ; and thereupon surcease from all further inquiries ? God himself said, ‘ I am,’ and he had done. But the argument, if it did prove any thing, would prove too much. To evince which, let the same way of reasoning be applied to what you call the ground or the reason of the existence of the First Cause, and then, with very little variation, I retort upon you in your own words. If this ground or reason be itself any thing, or any property of any thing, of what nature, kind, or degree soever, there must, according to your way of reasoning, be, in nature, a ground or reason of the existence of such your antecedent necessity, ‘ a reason why it is, rather than why it is not ; otherwise its existence will be owing to, or dependent on, mere

chance.' You observe elsewhere, that 'nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that any thing, or any circumstance of any thing, is, and yet that there is absolutely no reason why it is, rather than why it is not;' this consideration you allege as a vindication of your assigning a reason, *à priori*, for the existence of the First Cause. If, therefore, your supposed reason, ground, or necessity be 'any thing, or any supposable circumstance of any thing,' as, surely, it must be, if not mere nothing; then, by the same rule, such ground, necessity, &c., must have a reason, *à priori*, why it is, rather than why it is not, and after that another, and then a third, and so on *in infinitum*. And thus in your way we may be always seeking a first cause, and never be able to find one whereon to fix ourselves or such our restless and unprofitable inquiries. Whilst, indeed, we consider only inferior existences, and second causes, there will always be room left for inquiring why such things are, and how such things came to be as they are; because this is only seeking and investigating the initial, the efficient, or the final cause of their existence; but when we are advanced beyond all causes procatactical and final, it remains only to say, that such is our first cause and causality, that we know it exists, and without prior cause: And with this you yourself will be obliged to fall in, the first step you farther take; for if we ask you of the antecedent necessity, whence it is, and what prior ground there was for it, you must yourself be content to say, So it is, you know not why, you know not how."*

The necessary existence of the First Cause, considered as a logical necessity, may be made out without difficulty, and is indeed demonstrated in the arguments given above; but the natural necessity of his existence is a subject too subtle for human grasp, and, from its obscurity, is calculated to mislead. Every thing important in the idea, so far as it is unexceptionable, is well and safely expressed by Baxter: "That which could be eternally without a cause, and itself cause all things, is self-sufficient and independent."† This seems the only

* Gretton's Review of the Argument *à priori*.

† Reasons of the Christian Religion.

true notion of necessary existence, and care should be taken to use the term in a definite and comprehensible sense. The word necessity when applied to existence may be taken in two acceptations, either as it arises from the relation which the existence of that of which it is affirmed has to the existence of other things, or from the relation which the actual existence of that thing has to the manner of its own existence. In the former sense, it denotes that the supposition of the non-existence of that of which the necessity is affirmed, implies the non-existence of things we know to exist. Thus some independent being does necessarily exist; because to suppose no independent being, implies that there are no dependent beings, the contrary of which we know to be true. In the second sense, necessity means that the being of which it is affirmed exists after such a manner as that it never could in time past have been non-existent, or can in future time cease to be. Thus every independent being, as it exists without a cause, is necessarily existing, because existence is essential to such a being; so that it never could begin to exist, and never can cease to be: For to suppose a being to begin to exist, or to lose its existence, is to suppose a change from non-entity to entity, or *vice versâ*; and to suppose such a change, is to suppose a cause upon which that being depends. Every being therefore which is independent, that is, which had no cause of its existence, must exist necessarily, and cannot possibly have begun to exist in time past, or cease to be in time future.

Still further, on Dr. S. Clarke's view of the necessary existence of the supreme Being, it has been observed:—

“But what is this necessity which proves so much? It is the ground of existence (he says) of that which exists of itself; and if so, it must, in the order of nature, and in our conceptions, be antecedent to that being of whose existence it is the ground. Concerning such a principle there are but three suppositions which can possibly be made; and all of them may be shown to be absurd and contradictory: We may suppose either the substance itself, some property of that substance, or something extrinsic to both, to be this ante-

cedent ground of existence prior in the order of nature to the first cause.

“One would think, from the turn of the argument which here represents this antecedent necessity as efficient and causal, that it were considered as something extrinsic to the first cause. Indeed, if the words have any meaning in them at all, or any force of argument, they must be so understood, just as we understand them of any external cause producing its effect. But as an extrinsic principle is absurd in itself, and is, besides, rejected by Dr. S. Clarke, who says expressly, that ‘of the thing which derives not its being from any other thing, this necessity or ground of existence must be in the thing itself,’ we need not say a word more of the last of these suppositions.

“Let us, then, consider the first ; let us take the substance itself, and try whether it can be conceived as prior or antecedent to itself in our conceptions, or in the order of nature. Surely we need not observe, that nothing can be more absurd or contradictory than such a supposition. Dr. S. Clarke himself repeatedly affirms, (and it would be strange indeed if he did not affirm,) that no being, no thing whatever, can be conceived as in any respect prior to the first cause.

“The only remaining supposition is, that some attribute or property of the self-existent Being may be conceived as in the order of nature antecedent to that being. But this, if possible, is more absurd than either of the two preceding suppositions. An attribute is attributed to its subject as its ground or support, and not the subject to its attribute. A property, in the very notion of it, is proper to the substance to which it belongs, and subsequent to it both in our conceptions and in the order of nature. An antecedent attribute, or antecedent property, is a solecism as great, and a contradiction as flat, as an antecedent subsequent or a subsequent antecedent, understood in the same sense and in the same syllogism. Every property or attribute, as such, presupposes its subject ; and cannot otherwise be understood. This is a truth so obvious and so forcible, that it sometimes extorts the assent even of those who upon other occasions labour to obscure it. It is confessed by Dr. S. Clarke, that ‘the scholastic way of proving the existence of the

self-existent Being from the absolute perfection of his nature, is *υπερον προτερον*. For all or any perfections,' says he, 'presuppose existence; which is a *petitio principii*.' If, therefore, properties, modes, or attributes in God, be considered as perfections, (and it is impossible to consider them as any thing else,) then, by this confession of the great author himself, they must all or any of them presuppose existence. It is indeed immediately added, in the same place, 'that bare necessity of existence does not presuppose, but infer, existence; which is true only if such necessity be supposed to be a principle extrinsic, the absurdity of which has been already shown, and is indeed universally confessed. If it be a mode or property, it must presuppose the existence of its subject, as certainly and as evidently as it is a mode or a property. It might, perhaps, *à posteriori*, infer the existence of its subject, as effects may infer a cause; but that it should infer in the other way, *à priori*, is altogether as impossible as that a triangle should be a square, or a globe a parallelogram.'" *

The true idea of the necessary existence of God is, that he thus exists because it is his nature, as an independent and uncaused Being, to be; his being is necessary, because it is underived; not underived, because it is necessary. The first is the sober sense of the word among our old Divines; the latter is a theory of modern date, and leads to no practical result whatever, except to entangle the mind in difficulty, and to give a colour to some very injurious errors.

Equally unsatisfactory, and therefore quite as little calculated to serve the cause of truth, is the argument from space; which is represented by Newton, Clarke, and others, as an infinite mode of an infinite substance, and that substance God; so that from the existence of space itself may be argued the existence of one supreme and infinite Being. Berkeley, Law, and others, have, however, shown the fallacy of considering space either as a substance or a mode, and have brought these speculations under the dominion of common sense, and rescued them from metaphysical delusion. They have rightly observed,

* Law's Inquiry.

that space is a mere negation ; and that to suppose it to have existence, because it has some properties, for instance, of penetrability, or the capacity of receiving body, is the same thing as to affirm that darkness must be something because it has the capacity of receiving light, and silence something because it has the property of admitting sound, and absence the property of being supplied by presence. To reason in this manner is to assign absolute negations, and such as, in the same way, may be applied to nothing, and then call them positive properties, and so infer that the chimera, thus clothed with them, must needs be something. The arguments in favour of the real existence of space as something positive, have failed in the hands of their first great authors, and the attempts since made to uphold them have added nothing but what is exceedingly futile, and indeed often obviously absurd. The whole of this controversy has left us only to lament the waste of labour which has been employed in erecting, around the impregnable ramparts of the great arguments on which the cause rests with so much safety, the useless incumbrances of mud and straw.

The proof of the being of a God reposes wholly, then, upon arguments *à posteriori*, and it needs no other ; though we shall see as we proceed, that even these arguments, strong and irrefutable as they are when rightly applied, have been used to prove more, as to some of the attributes of God, than can satisfactorily be drawn from them. Even with this safe and convincing process of reasoning at our command, we shall find, at every step of an inquiry into the divine nature, our entire dependence upon divine revelation for our primary light ; that must both originate our investigations, and conduct them to a satisfactory result.

CHAPTER II.

*Attributes of God : *—Unity—Spirituality.*

THE existence of a supreme Creator and First Cause of all things, himself uncaused and independent, and therefore self-existent, having been proved, the next question is, whether there exists more than one such being, or, in other words, whether we are to ascribe to him an absolute unity or soleness. On this point the testimony of the Scriptures is express and unequivocal. "The Lord our God is one Lord." (Deut. vi. 4.) "The Lord he is God, there is none else beside him." (Deut. iv. 35.) "Thou art God alone." (Psalm lxxxvi. 10.) "We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one." Nor is this stated in Scripture, merely to exclude all other creators, governors, and deities, in connexion with men, and the system of created things which we behold ; but absolutely, so as to exclude the idea of the existence, any where, of more than one divine nature.

Of this unity, the proper Scripture notion may be thus expressed : Some things are one by virtue of composition ; but God hath no parts, nor is he compounded, but is a pure simple being. Some are one in kind, but admit many individuals of the same kind, as men, angels, and other creatures ; but God is so one, that there are no other gods, though there are other beings. Some things are so one, as that there exists

* "They are called 'attributes,' because God attributes them to, and affirms them of, himself. 'Properties,' because we conceive them proper to God, and such as can be predicated only of him, so that by them we distinguish him from all other beings. 'Perfections,' because they are the several representations of that one perfection which is himself. 'Names' and 'terms,' because they express and signify something of his essence. 'Notions,' because they are so many apprehensions of his being as we conceive of him in our minds."—LAWSON'S *Theo-Politica*.

no other of the same kind, as are one sun, one moon, one world, one heaven ; yet there might have been more, if it had pleased God so to will it. But God is so one, that there is not, there cannot be, another God. He is one only, and takes up the Deity so fully as to admit no fellow.*

The proof of this important doctrine from Scripture is short and simple. We have undoubted proofs of a revelation from the Maker and Governor of this present world. Granting him to be wise and good, " it is impossible that God should lie ;" and his own testimony assigns to him an exclusive Deity. If we admit the authority of the Scriptures, we admit a Deity ; if we admit one God, we exclude all others. The truth of Scripture resting, as we have seen, on proofs which cannot be resisted without universal scepticism, and universal scepticism being proved to be impossible by the common conduct of even the most sceptical men, the proof of the divine unity rests precisely on the same basis, and is sustained by the same certain evidence.

On this as on the former point, however, there is much rational confirmation, to which revelation has given us the key ; though without that, and even in its strongest form, it may be concluded from the prevalence of polytheism among the generality of nations, and of dualism among others, that the human mind would have had but too indistinct a view of this kind of evidence to rest in a conclusion so necessary to true religion, and to settled rules of morals.

To prove the unity of God several arguments *à priori* have been made use of ; to which mode of proof, provided the argument itself be logical, no objection lies. For though it appears absurd to attempt to prove *à priori* the existence of a First Cause, seeing that nothing can either in order of time or order of nature be prior to him, or be conceived prior to him ; yet the existence of an independent and self-existent Cause of all things being made known to us by revelation, and confirmed by the phenomena of actual and dependent existence, a ground is laid for considering, from this fact, which is

* Lawson's *Theo-Politica*.

antecedent in order of nature, though not in order of time, the consequent attributes with which such a being must be invested.

Among the arguments of this class to prove the divine unity, the following are the principal :—

Dr. S. Clarke argues from his view of the necessary existence of the divine Being : “ Necessity,” he observes, “ absolute in itself, is simple, and uniform, and universal, without any possible difference, difformity, or variety whatsoever ; and all variety or difference of existence must needs arise from some external cause, and be dependent upon it.” And again : “ To suppose two or more distinct beings existing of themselves necessarily, and independent of each other, implies this contradiction, that each of them being independent of each other, they may either of them be supposed to exist alone, so that it will be no contradiction to suppose the other not to exist, and, consequently, neither of them will be necessarily existing.”* These arguments being, however, wholly founded upon that peculiar notion of necessary existence which is advocated by the author, derive their whole authority from the principle itself, to which some objections have been offered.

The argument from space must share the same fate. If space be an infinite attribute of an infinite substance, and an essential attribute of Deity, then the existence of one infinite substance, and one only, may probably be argued from the existence of this infinite property ; but if space be a mere negation, and neither substance nor attribute, which has been sufficiently proved by the writers before referred to, then it is worth nothing as a proof of the unity of God.

Wollaston argues, that if two or more independent beings exist, their natures must be the same or different ; if different, either contrary or various. If contrary, each must destroy the operations of the other ; if various, one must have what the other wants, and both cannot be perfect. If their nature be perfectly the same, then they would coincide, and indeed be but one, though called two.†

* Demonstration, Prop. 7.

† Religion of Nature.

Bishop Wilkins says, if God be an infinitely-perfect Being, it is impossible to imagine two such beings at the same time, because they must have several perfections, or the same. If the former, neither of them can be God, because neither of them has all possible perfections. If they have both equal perfections, neither of them can be absolutely perfect, because it is not so great to have the same equal perfections in common with another, as to be superior to all others.*

“The nature of God,” says Bishop Pearson, “consists in this, that he is the prime and original Cause of all things, as an independent Being upon whom all things else depend, and likewise the ultimate end or final cause of all: But in this sense, two prime causes are unimaginable; and for all things to depend on one, and yet for there to be more independent beings than one, is a clear contradiction.”†

The best argument of this kind, however, is that which arises from absolute perfection, the idea of which forces itself upon our minds, when we reflect upon the nature of a self-existent and independent Being. Such a Being there is, as is sufficiently proved from the existence of beings dependent and derived; and it is impossible to admit this without concluding, that he who is independent and underived, who subsists wholly and only of himself, without depending on any other, must owe this absoluteness to so peculiar an excellency of his own nature, as we cannot well conceive to be less than that by which he comprehends in himself the most boundless and unlimited fulness of being, life, power, or whatsoever can be conceived under the name of a perfection. “To such a being infinity may be justly ascribed; and infinity, not extrinsically considered with respect to time and place, but intrinsically, as imparting bottomless profundity of essence, and the full confluence of all kinds and degrees of perfection without bound or limit.”‡ “Limitation is the effect of some superior cause, which, in the present instance, there cannot be; consequently, to suppose limits where there can be no limiter, is to

* Principles of Natural Religion.

† Exposition of the Creed.

‡ Howe's Living Temple.

suppose an effect without a cause. For a being to be limited or deficient in any respect, is to be dependent in that respect on some other being which gave it just so much and no more ; consequently, that being which in no respect depends upon any other, is in no respect limited or deficient. In all beings capable of increase or diminution, and, consequently, incapable of perfection or absolute infinity, limitation or defect is indeed a necessary consequence of existence, and is only a negation of that perfection which is wholly incompatible with their nature ; and therefore in these beings it requires no further cause. But in a being naturally capable of perfection or absolute infinity, all imperfection or finiteness, as it cannot flow from the nature of that being, seems to require some ground or reason ; which reason, as it is foreign from the being itself, must be the effect of some other external cause, and consequently cannot have place in the first cause. That the self-existent Being is capable of perfection or absolute infinity, must be granted, because he is manifestly the subject of one infinite or perfect attribute, namely, eternity or absolute invariable existence. In this respect his existence is perfect, and therefore it may be perfect in every other respect also. Now that which is the subject of one infinite attribute or perfection, must have all its attributes infinitely or in perfection ; since to have any perfections in a finite, limited manner, when the subject and these perfections are both capable of strict infinity, would be the fore-mentioned absurdity of positive limitation without a cause. To suppose this eternal and independent Being limited in or by its own nature, is to suppose some antecedent nature or limiting quality superior to that being, to the existence of which no thing, no quality, is in any respect antecedent or superior. The same method of reasoning will prove knowledge and every other perfection to be infinite in the Deity, when once we have proved that perfection to belong to him at all : at least it will show, that to suppose it limited is unreasonable, since we can find no manner of ground for limitation in any respect ; and this is as far as we need go, or perhaps as natural light will lead us.”*

* Dr. Gleig.

H H

The connexion between the steps of the argument from the self-existence and infinity of the Deity to his unity, may be thus traced: There is actually existing an absolute, entire fulness of wisdom, power, and of all other perfection. This absolute, entire fulness of perfection is infinite. This infinite perfection must have its seat somewhere. Its primary, original seat can be nowhere but in necessary self-subsisting being. If then we suppose a plurality of self-originate beings concurring to make up the seat or subject of this infinite perfection, each one must either be of finite and partial perfection, or infinite and absolute. Infinite and absolute it cannot be, because one self-originate, infinitely and absolutely perfect Being will necessarily comprehend all perfection and leave nothing to the rest: Nor finite, because many finites can never make one infinite; nor many broken parcels or fragments of perfection ever make infinite and absolute perfection, even though their number, if that were possible, were infinite.

To these arguments from the divine nature, proofs of his unity are to be drawn from his works. Whilst we have no revelation of or from any other being than from him whom we worship as God; so the frame and constitution of nature present us with a harmony and order which show that their Creator and Preserver is but one. We see but one will and one intelligence, and therefore there is but one Being. The light of this truth must have been greatly obscured to Heathens, who knew not how to account for the admixture of good and evil which are in the world; and many of them therefore supposed both a good and an evil deity. To us, however, who know how to account for this fact from the relation in which man stands to the moral government of an offended Deity, and the connexion of this present state with another; and that it is to man a state of correction and discipline; not only is this difficulty removed, but additional proof is afforded, that the Creator and the Ruler of the world is but one Being. If two independent beings of equal power concurred to make the world, the good and the evil would be equal; but the good predominates. Between the good and the evil there could also be no harmony or connexion; but we plainly see evil subjected

to the purposes of benevolence, and so to accord with it, which at once removes the objection.

“Of the unity of the Deity,” says Paley, “the proof is, the uniformity of plan observable in the universe. The universe itself is a system; each part either depending upon other parts, or being connected with other parts by some common law of motion, or by the presence of some common substance. One principle of gravitation causes a stone to drop towards the earth, and the moon to wheel round it. One law of attraction carries all the different planets about the sun. This philosophers demonstrate. There are also other points of agreement amongst them, which may be considered as marks of the identity of their origin, and of their intelligent author. In all are found the conveniency and stability derived from gravitation. They all experience vicissitudes of days and nights, and changes of season. They all—at least, Jupiter, Mars, and Venus—have the same advantages from their atmospheres as we have. In all the planets, the axes of rotation are permanent. Nothing is more probable, than that the same attracting influence, acting according to the same rule, reaches to the fixed stars; but if this be only probable, another thing is certain, namely, that the same element of light does. The light from a fixed star affects our eyes in the same manner, is refracted and reflected according to the same laws, as the light of a candle. The velocity of the light of the fixed stars is also the same as the velocity of the light of the sun, reflected from the satellites of Jupiter. The heat of the sun, in kind, differs nothing from the heat of a coal fire.

“In our own globe the case is clearer. New countries are continually discovered, but the old laws of nature are always found in them; new plants, perhaps, or animals, but always in company with plants and animals which we already know, and always possessing many of the same general properties. We never get amongst such original or totally different modes of existence, as to indicate that we are come into the province of a different Creator, or under the direction of a different will. In truth, the same order of things attends us wherever we go. The elements act upon one another, electricity operates, the

tides rise and fall, the magnetic needle elects its position, in one region of the earth and sea as well as in another. One atmosphere invests all parts of the globe, and connects all; one sun illuminates, one moon exerts its specific attraction upon, all parts. If there be a variety in natural effects, (as, for example, in the tides of different seas,) that very variety is the result of the same cause, acting under different circumstances. In many cases this is proved; in all, is probable.

“The inspection and comparison of living forms add to this argument examples without number. Of all large terrestrial animals, the structure is very much alike; their senses nearly the same; their natural functions and passions nearly the same; their viscera nearly the same, both in substance, shape, and office; digestion, nutrition, circulation, secretion, go on, in a similar manner, in all; the great circulating fluid is the same; for I think no difference has been discovered in the properties of blood from whatever animal it be drawn. The experiment of transfusion proves, that the blood of one animal will serve for another. The skeletons also of the larger terrestrial animals show particular varieties, but still under a great general affinity. The resemblance is somewhat less, yet sufficiently evident, between quadrupeds and birds. They are all alike in five respects, for one in which they differ.

“In fish, which belong to another department, as it were, of nature, the points of comparison become fewer. But we never lose sight of our analogy; for instance, we still meet with a stomach, a liver, a spine; with bile and blood; with teeth; with eyes, which eyes are only slightly varied from our own, and which variation, in truth, demonstrates, not an interruption, but a continuance, of the same exquisite plan; for it is the adaptation of the organ to the element, namely, to the different refraction of light passing into the eye out of a denser medium. The provinces, also, themselves of water and earth are connected by the species of animals which inhabit both; and also by a large tribe of aquatic animals which closely resemble the terrestrial in their internal structure: I mean the cetaceous tribe, which have hot blood, respiring lungs, bowels, and other essential parts, like those of land animals. This

similitude, surely, bespeaks the same creation, and the same Creator.

“Insects and shell-fish appear to me to differ from other classes of animals the most widely of any. Yet even here, beside many points of particular resemblance, there exists a general relation of a peculiar kind. It is the relation of inversion; the law of contrariety; namely, that whereas, in other animals, the bones to which the muscles are attached lie within the body, in insects and shell-fish they lie on the outside of it. The shell of a lobster performs to the animal the office of a bone, by furnishing to the tendons that fixed basis, or immovable fulcrum, without which, mechanically, they could not act. The crust of an insect is its shell, and answers the like purpose. The shell also of an oyster stands in the place of a bone; the bases of the muscles being fixed to it, in the same manner as, in other animals, they are fixed to the bones. All which (under wonderful varieties, indeed, and adaptations of form) confesses an imitation, a remembrance, a carrying on of the same plan.”

If in a large house, wherein are many mansions and a vast variety of inhabitants, there appears exact order, all from the highest to the lowest continually attending their proper business, and all lodged and constantly provided for suitably to their several conditions, we find ourselves obliged to acknowledge one wise economy; and if in a great city or commonwealth there is a perfectly regular administration, so that not only the whole society enjoys an undisturbed peace, but every member has the station assigned him which he is best qualified to fill, the unenvied chiefs constantly attending their more important cares, served by the busy inferiors, who have all a suitable accommodation, and food convenient for them; the very meanest ministering to the public utility, and protected by the public care;—if, I say, in such a community we must conclude there is a ruling counsel, which if not naturally yet is politically one, and, unless united, could not produce such harmony and order; much more have we reason to recognise one governing Intelligence in the earth, in which there are so many ranks of beings disposed of in the most convenient man-

ner, having all their several provinces appointed to them, and their several kinds and degrees of enjoyment liberally provided for, without encroaching upon, but rather being mutually useful to, each other, according to a settled and obvious subordination. What else can account for this but a sovereign wisdom, a common provident nature, presiding over, and caring for, the whole? *

The importance of the doctrine of the divine unity is obvious. The existence of one God is the basis of all true religion. Polytheism confounds and unsettles all moral distinction, divides and destroys obligation, and takes away all sure trust and hope from man. There is one God who created us; we are therefore his property, and bound to him by an absolute obligation of obedience. He is the sole Ruler of the world, and his one immutable will constitutes the one immutable law of our actions, and thus questions of morality are settled on permanent foundations. To him alone we owe repentance, and confession of sin; to one Being alone we are directed to look for pardon, in the method which he has appointed; and if he be at peace with us, we need fear the wrath of no other, for he is supreme; we are not at a loss among a crowd of supposed deities, to which of them we shall turn in trouble; he alone receives prayer, and he is the sole and sufficient object of trust. When we know him, we know a Being of absolute perfection, and need no other friend or refuge.

Among the discoveries made to us by divine revelation, we find not only declarations of the existence and unity of God, but of his nature or substance, which is plainly affirmed to be spiritual: "God is a Spirit." The sense of the Scriptures in this respect cannot be mistaken. Innumerable passages and allusions in them show that the terms "spirit" and "body," or "matter," are used in the popular sense for substances of a perfectly distinct kind, which are manifested by distinct and, in many respects, opposite and incommunicable properties; that the former only can perceive, think, reason, will, and act;

* Abernethy's Sermons.

that the latter is passive, impercipient, divisible, and corruptible. Under these views, and in this popular language, God is spoken of in holy writ. He is spirit, not body ; mind, not matter. He is pure spirit, unconnected even with bodily form or organs : “ The invisible God whom no man hath seen or can see ; ” an immaterial, incorruptible, impassible substance ; an immense mind or intelligence, self-acting, self-moving, wholly above the perception of bodily sense ; free from the imperfections of matter, and all the infirmities of corporeal beings ; far more excellent than any finite and created spirits, because their Creator, and therefore styled, “ the Father of spirits,” and “ the God of the spirits of all flesh.”

Such is the express testimony of Scripture as to the divine Nature. That the distinction which it holds between matter and spirit should be denied or disregarded by infidel philosophers, is not a matter of surprise, since it is easy and as consistent in them to materialize God as man. But that the attributes of spirit should have been ascribed to matter by those who, nevertheless, profess to admit the authority of the biblical revelation, as in the case of the modern Unitarians and some others, is an instance of singular inconsistency. It shows with what daring an unhallowed philosophy will pursue its speculations ; and warrants the conclusion, that the Scriptures, in such cases, are not acknowledged upon their own proper principles, but only so far as they are supposed to agree with, or not to oppose, the philosophic system which such men may have adopted. For, (hesitate as they may,) to deny the distinction between matter and spirit, is to deny the spirituality of God, and to contradict the distinction which, as to man, is constantly kept up in every part of the Bible,—the distinction between flesh and spirit. To assert that consciousness, thought, volition, &c., are the results of organization, is to deny also what the Scripture so expressly affirms,—that the souls of men exist in a disembodied state ; and that, in this disembodied state, not only do they exist, but that they think, and feel, and act, without any diminution of their energy or capacity. The immateriality of the divine Being may, therefore, be considered as a point of great importance, not only as it

affects our views of his nature and attributes, but because, when once it is established that there exists a pure Spirit, living, intelligent, and invested with moral properties, the question of the immateriality of the human soul may be considered as almost settled. Those who deny that must admit that the Deity is material ; or, if they start at this, they must be convicted of the unphilosophical and absurd attempt to invest a substance, allowed to be of an entirely different nature, (the body of man,) with those attributes of intelligence and volition which, in the case of the divine Being, they have allowed to be the properties of pure unembodied spirit. The propositions are totally inconsistent ; for they who believe that God is wholly an immaterial being, and that man is wholly a material one, admit that spirit is intelligent, and that matter is intelligent. They cannot, then, be of different essences : and if the premises be followed out to their legitimate conclusion, either that which thinks in man must be allowed to be spiritual, or a material Deity must follow. The whole truth of revelation, both as to God and his creature man, must be acknowledged, or the Atheism of Spinoza and Hobbes must be admitted.

The decision of Scripture on this point is not to be shaken by human reasoning, were it more plausible, in its attempt to prove that matter is capable of originating thought, and that mind is a mere result of organization. The evidence from reason is, however, highly confirmatory of the absolute spirituality of the nature of God, and of the unthinking nature of matter.

If we allow a First Cause at all, we must allow that Cause to be intelligent ; this has already been proved, from the design and contrivance manifested in his works. The first argument for the spirituality of God is therefore drawn from his intelligence ; and it rests upon this principle,—that intelligence is not a property of matter.

With material substance we are largely acquainted ; and as to the great mass of material bodies, we have the means of knowing that they are wholly unintelligent. This cannot be denied of every unorganized portion of matter. Its essential

properties are found to be solidity, extension, divisibility, mobility, passiveness, &c. In all its forms and mutations, from the granite rock to the yielding atmosphere and the rapid lightning, these essential properties are discovered ; they take an infinite variety of accidental modes, but give no indication of intelligence, or approach to intelligence. If, then, to know be a property of matter, it is clearly not an essential property, inasmuch as it is agreed by all that vast masses of this substance exist without this property ; and it follows that it must be an accidental one. This, therefore, would be the first absurdity into which those would be driven who suppose the divine Nature to be material ; that as intelligence, if allowed to be a property of matter, is an accidental, and not an essential, property, on this theory it would be possible to conceive of the existence of a Deity without any intelligence at all. For, take away any property from a subject which is not essential to it, and its essence still remains ; and if intelligence, which, in this view, is but an accidental attribute of Deity, were annihilated, a Deity without perception, thought, or knowledge would still remain. So monstrous a conclusion shows, that if a God be at all allowed, the absolute spirituality of his nature must inevitably follow. For if we cannot suppose a Deity without intelligence, then do we admit intelligence to be one of his essential attributes ; and as it is easy for every one to observe that this is not an essential property of matter, the substance to which it is essential cannot be material.

If the unthinking nature of unorganized matter furnishes an argument in favour of the spirituality of Deity, the attempt to prove, from the fact of intelligence being found in connexion with matter in an organized form, that intelligence, under certain modifications, is a property of matter, may, from its fallacy, be also made to yield its evidence in favour of the truth.

The position assumed is, that intelligence is the result of material organization. This, at least, is not true of every form of organized matter. Of the unintelligent character of vegetables we have the same evidence as of the earth on which

we tread. The organization, therefore, which is assumed to be the cause of thought, is that which is found in animals; and, to use the argument of Dr. Priestley, "the powers of sensation, or perception, and thought, as belonging to man, not having been found but in conjunction with a certain organized system of matter, the conclusion is, that they depend upon such a system." It need not now be urged that constant connexion does not imply necessary connexion; and that sufficient reasons may be given to prove the connexion alleged to be accidental and arbitrary. It is sufficient, in the first instance, to deny this supposed constant connexion between intellectual properties and systems of animal organization; and thus to take away entirely the foundation of the argument.

Man is to be considered in two states, that of life, and that of death. In one he thinks, and in the other he ceases to think; and yet for some time after death, in many cases, the organization of the human frame continues as perfect as before. All do not die of organic disease; death by suffocation, and other causes, is often effected without any visible violence being done to the brain, or any other of the most delicate organs. This is a well-established fact; for the most accurate anatomical observation is not able to discover, in such cases as we have referred to, the slightest organic derangement; the machine has been stopped, but the machine itself has suffered no injury; and from the period of death to the time when the matter of the body begins to submit to the laws of chemical decomposition, its organization is as perfect as during life. If an opponent replies, that organic violence must have been sustained, though it is indiscernible, he begs the question, and assumes that thought must depend upon organization,—the very point in dispute. If, more modest, he says that the organs may have suffered, he can give no proof of it; appearances are all against him. And if he argues from the phenomenon of the connexion of thought with organization, grounding himself upon what is visible to observation only, the argument is completely repulsed by an appeal, in like manner, to the fact, that the organization of the animal frame can be often exhibited visibly unimpaired by those causes

which have produced death, and yet incapable of thought and intelligence. The conclusion, therefore, is, that mere organization cannot be the cause of intelligence, since it is plain that precisely the same state of the organs shall often be found before and after death ; and yet, without any violence having been done to them, in one moment man shall be actually intelligent, and in the next incapable of a thought. So far, then, from the connexion between mental phenomena and the arrangement of matter in the animal structure being “constant,”—the ground of the argument of Priestley and other materialists,—it is often visibly broken ; for a perfect organization of the animal remains after perception has become extinct.

In support of this argument, we may urge the representations of Scripture, upon that class of materialists who have not proceeded to the full length of denying its authority. Adam was formed out of the dust of the earth ; the organism of his frame was therefore complete, before he became “a living soul.” God breathed into him “the breath of lives ;” and, whatever different persons may understand by that inspiration, it certainly was not an organizing operation. The man was first formed or organized, and then life was imparted. Before the animating breath was inspired, he was not intelligent, because he lived not ; yet the organization was complete before either life or the power of perception was imparted ; thought did not arise out of his organic structure, as an effect from its cause.

The doctrine that mere organization is the cause of perception, &c., being clearly untenable, we shall probably be told, that the subject supposed in the argument is a living organized being. If so, then the proof that matter can think, drawn from organization, is given up, and another cause of the phenomenon of intelligence is introduced. This is life ; and the argument will be considerably altered. It will no longer be, as we have before quoted it from Dr. Priestley, “that the powers of sensation or perception and thought, never having been found but in conjunction with a certain organized system of matter, the conclusion is that they depend upon such a

system ;” but that these powers not having been found except in conjunction with animal life, they depend upon that as their cause.

What, then, is life, which is thus exhibited as the cause of intelligence, and as the proof that matter is capable of perception and thought? In its largest and commonly received sense, it is that inherent activity which distinguishes vegetable and animal bodies from the soils in which the former grow, and on which the latter tread. A vegetable is said to “live,” because it has motion within itself, and is capable of absorption, secretion, nutrition, growth, and the reproduction of its kind. With all this, it exhibits no mental phenomena, no sensation, no consciousness, no volition, no reflection; in a word, it is utterly unintelligent. We have here a proof, then, as satisfactory as our argument from organization, that life, at least life of any kind, is not the cause of intelligence, for in ten thousand instances we see it existing in bodies to which it imparts no mental properties at all.

If then it be said, that the life intended as the cause of intelligence is not vegetable but animal life, the next step in the inquiry is, in what the life of an animal differs from that of a vegetable: And if we go into the camp of the enemy himself, we shall find him laying it down, that to animals a double life belongs, the organic and the animal; the former of which, animals, and even man, have only in common with the vegetable. One modification of life, says Bichat, (upon whose scheme our modern materialists have modelled their arguments,) is common to vegetables and animals, the other peculiar to the latter. “Compare together two individuals, one taken from each of these kingdoms: One exists only within itself, has no other relations to external objects than those of nutrition; is born, grows, and perishes, attached to the soil which received its germ. The other joins to this internal life, which it possesses in a still higher degree, an external life, which establishes numerous relations between it and the neighbouring objects, unites its existence to that of other beings, and draws it near to, or removes it from, them,

according to its wants and fears.”* This is only in other words to say, that there is one kind of life in man, which, as in the vegetable, is the cause of growth, circulation, assimilation, nutrition, excretion, and similar functions; and another, on which depend sensation, the passions, will, memory, and other attributes that we ascribe to spirit. We have gained, then, by this distinction, another step in the argument: There is a life common to animals and to vegetables. Whether this be simple mechanism, or something more, matters nothing to the conclusion; it confers neither sensation, nor volition, nor reason. That life in men, and in the inferior animals, which is common to them and to vegetables, called, by Bichat and his followers, “organic life,” is evidently not the cause of intelligence.

What, then, is that higher species of life called “animal life,” on which we are told our mental powers depend? And here the French materialist, whose notions have been so readily adopted into our own schools of physiology, shall speak for himself: “The functions of the animal form two distinct classes. One of these consists of an habitual succession of assimilation and concretion, by which it is constantly transforming into its own substance the particles of other bodies, and then rejecting them when they have become useless. By the other he perceives surrounding objects, reflects on his sensations, performs voluntary motions under their influence, and generally communicates, by the voice, his pleasures or pains, his desires or fears.” “The assembled functions of the second class form the animal life.”

This strange definition of life has been adopted by Lawrence, and other disciples of the French school of materialism; but its absurdity as a definition is obvious, and could only have been adopted as a veil of words to hide a conclusion fatal to the favourite system. So far from being a definition of life, it is no more than a description of the functions of a vital principle or power, whatever that power or principle may be. Function is a manner in which any power develops itself;

* *Recherches sur la Vie et la Mort.*

or, as Lawrence, the disciple of Bichat, has properly expressed it, “a mode of action ;” and to say that an assemblage of the modes in which any thing acts, is that which acts, or “forms” that which acts, is the greatest possible trifling and folly.

But Bichat is not the only one of modern materialists who refuse honestly to pursue the inquiry, “What is life ?” when even affecting to describe or defend it. Cuvier, another great authority in the same school, at one time says, that, be life what it may, it cannot be what the vulgar suppose it,—a particular principle. (*Principe particulier.*) In another place he acknowledges that life can proceed only from life. (*La vie ne naît que de la vie.*) Then again he considers it an internal principle ; (*un principe intérieur d'entretien et de réparation ;*) and last of all says, what Mr. Lawrence has since repeated verbatim, that life consists in the sum total of all the functions. (*Elle consiste dans l'ensemble des fonctions qui servent à nourrir le corps, c'est-à-dire, la digestion, l'absorption, la circulation, &c.*) Thus he makes life a cause which owes its existence to its own operations, and consequently a cause which, had it not operated to produce itself, had never operated nor existed at all !* “It is truly pitiful,” says a physiologist of other opinions, “to think of a man with so many endowments, natural and acquired, driven as if blindfold by the fashion of the times, a contemptible vanity, or some wretched inclination, endeavouring to support, with all his energy, the extravagant idea that the phenomena of design and intelligence displayed in the form and structure of his species might have been the effects of some impulse or motion, or of some group of functions, as digestion, circulation, respiration, &c., which have accidentally happened to meet without any assignable cause to bring them together, to hold them together, or to direct them.”†

These and many other examples are in proof, that the cause of vital properties cannot, we do not say be explained, but cannot even be indicated, on the material system : And we are

* Vide Medical Review, Sept., 1822. Art. 1.

† Dr. Barclay On Life and Organization.

no nearer, for any thing which these physiologists say, to any satisfactory account of that life which is peculiar to animals, and which has been distinguished from the organic life that is common to them and to vegetables. It is not the result of organization ; for that “ is no living principle, no active cause.” “ An organ is an instrument. Organization, therefore, is nothing more than a system of parts so constructed and arranged, as to co-operate to one common purpose. It is an arrangement of instruments, and there must be something beyond to bring these instruments into action.”* If life cannot, therefore, be organization, or the effect of it, it is not that inherent, mechanical, and chemical motion which is called life in vegetables, and which the physiologists have decided to be the same kind of life which they call “ organic ” in animals ; for even the materialist acknowledges that to be a different species of life in animals, on which sensation, volition, and passion depend. What, then, is it ? It is not a material substance ; in that all agree. It is not the material effect of the material cause, organization ; that has been shown to be absurd. It is not that mechanical and chemical inherent motion which performs so many functions in vegetables and in animals, so far as they have it in common with them ; for no sensation, or other mental phenomena, are allowed to result from these. It is therefore plainly no material cause, and no effect of matter at all ; for no other hypothesis remains but that which places its source in an immaterial subject, operating upon and by material organs. For, to quote from a writer just mentioned, “ that there is some invisible agent in every living organized system, seems to be an inference to which we are led almost irresistibly. When we see an animal starting from its sleep, contrary to the known laws of gravitation, without an external or elastic impulse, without the appearance of electricity, galvanism, magnetism, or chemical attraction ; when we see it afterwards moving its limbs in various directions, with different degrees of force and velocity, sometimes suspending and sometimes renewing the same motions, at the sound of a word or

* Rennell's Remarks on Scepticism.

the sight of a shadow ; can we refrain a moment from thinking that the cause of these phenomena is internal, that it is something different from the body, and that the several bodily organs are nothing more than the mere instruments which it employs in its operations ? Not instruments indeed that can be manufactured, purchased, or exchanged, or that can at pleasure be varied in form, position, number, proportion, or magnitude ; not instruments, whose motions are dependent upon an external impulse, on gravity, elasticity, magnetism, galvanism ; on electricity or chemical attraction ; but instruments of a peculiar nature ; instruments that grow, that are moved by the will, and that can be regulated and kept in repair by no agent but the one for which they were primarily destined ; instruments so closely related to that agent, that they cannot be injured, handled, or breathed upon, approached by cold, by wind, by rain, without exciting in it certain sensations of pleasure or of pain ; sensations which, if either unusual or excessive, are generally accompanied with joy or grief, hopes or alarms ; instruments, in short, that exert so constant and powerful re-action on the agent that employs them, that they modify almost every phenomenon which it exhibits, and to such an extent, that no person can confidently say what would be the effect of its energies if deprived of instruments ; or what would be the effect of its energies if furnished with instruments of a different species, or if furnished with instruments of different materials, less dependent on external circumstances, and less subject to the laws of gross and inert matter." *

Life, then, whether organic or animal, is not the cause of intelligence ; and thus all true reasoning upon these phenomena brings us to the philosophy of the Scriptures,—that the presence of an immaterial soul with the body, is the source of animal life ; and that the separation of the soul from the body is that circumstance which causes death.† Further

* Barclay On Life and Organization.

† The celebrated Hunter " in searching for the principle of life, on the supposition that it was something visible, fruitlessly enough looked for it in the blood, the chyle, the brain, the lungs, and other parts of the body ; but, not finding it in any of them exclusively, concluded that it must be a conse-

proofs, however, are not wanting, that matter is incapable of thought, and that various qualities are inconsistent with mental phenomena.

“ Extension is an universal quality of matter ; being that cohesion and continuity of its parts by which a body occupies space. The idea of extension is gained by our external senses of sight and of touch. But thought is neither visible nor tangible, it occupies no external space, it has no contiguous or cohering parts. A mind enlarged by education and science, a memory stored with the richest treasures of varied knowledge, occupies no more space than that of the meanest and most illiterate rustic.

“ In body again we find a *vis inertiae*, that is, a certain quality by which it resists any change in its present state. We know by experiment, that a body, when it has received an impulse, will persevere in a direct course and an uniform velocity, until its motion shall be either disturbed or retarded by some external power ; and again, that, being at rest, it will remain so for ever, unless motion shall have been communicated to it from without. Since matter, therefore, necessarily resists all change of its present state, its motion and its rest are purely passive ; spontaneous motion, therefore, must have some other origin. Nor is this spontaneous motion to be attributed to the simple powers of life ; for we have seen that in the life of vegetation there is no spontaneous motion ; the plant has no power either to remove itself out of the position in which it is fixed, or even to accelerate or retard the motion which takes place within it. Nor has man himself, in a sleep perfectly sound, the power of locomotion, any more than a plant, nor any command over the various active processes

quence of the union of the whole, and depend upon organism. But to this conclusion he could not long adhere, after observing that the composition of matter does not give life, and that a dead body may have all the composition it ever had. Last of all, he drew the true, or at least the candid, conclusion, that he knew nothing about the matter.”—*Medico-Chirurgical Review*, Sept., 1822. This is the conclusion to which mere philosophy comes, and the only one at which it can arrive, till it stoops to believe that there is true philosophy in the Scriptures.

which are going on within his own body. But when he is awake, he will rise from his resting-place ;—if mere matter, whether living or dead, were concerned, he would have remained there like a plant or a stone for ever. He will walk forward ; he will change his course ; he will stop. Can matter, even though endowed with the life of vegetation, perform any such acts as these ? Here is motion fairly begun without any external impulse, and stopped without any external obstacle. The activity of a plant, on the contrary, is neither spontaneous nor locomotive ; it is derived in regular succession from parent substances, and it can be stopped only by external obstacles, such as the disturbance of the organization. A mass even of living matter requires something beyond its own powers to overcome the *vis inertiae* which still distinguishes it, and to produce active and spontaneous motion.

“ Hardness and impenetrability are qualities of matter ; but no one of common sense, without a very palpable metaphor, could ever consider them as the properties of thought.

“ There is another property of matter, which is, if possible, still more inconsistent with thought than any of the former ; I mean, its divisibility. Let us take any material substance, (the brain, the heart, or any other body,) which we would have endowed with thought, and inquire, Of what is this substance composed ? It is the aggregate of an indefinite number of separable and separate parts. Now the experience of what passes within our minds will inform us, that unity is essential to a thinking being. That consciousness which establishes the one individual being, which every man knows himself to be, cannot, without a contradiction in terms, be separated or divided. No man can think in two separate places at the same time : Nor, again, is his consciousness made up of a number of separate consciousnesses ; as the solidity, the colour, and motion of the whole body are made up of the distinct solidities, colours, and motions of its parts. As a thinking and a conscious being, then, man must be essentially one. As a partaker of the life of vegetation, he is separable into ten thousand different parts. If, then, it is the brain of a man which is conscious and thinks, his conscious-

ness and thought must be made up of as many separate parts as there are particles in its material substance ; which is contrary to common sense and experience. Whatever, therefore, our thought may be, or in whatever it may reside, it is essentially indivisible ; and, therefore, wholly inconsistent with the divisibility of a material substance.

“ From every quality, therefore, of matter, with which we are acquainted, we shall be warranted in concluding that, without a contradiction in terms, it cannot be pronounced capable of thought. A thinking substance may be combined with a stone, a tree, or an animal body ; but not one of the three can of itself become a thinking being.”*

“ The notions we annex to the words ‘ matter ’ and ‘ mind,’ as is well remarked by Dr. Reid, are merely relative. If I am asked what I mean by matter ; I can only explain myself by saying, It is that which is extended, figured, coloured, movable, hard or soft, rough or smooth, hot or cold ;—that is, I can define it in no other way than by enumerating its sensible qualities. It is not matter, or body, which I perceive by my senses ; but only extension, figure, colour, and certain other qualities, which the constitution of my nature leads me to refer to something which is extended, figured, and coloured. The case is precisely similar with respect to mind. We are not immediately conscious of its existence, but we are conscious of sensation, thought, and volition ; operations which imply the existence of something which feels, thinks, and wills. Every man, too, is impressed with an irresistible conviction, that all these sensations, thoughts, and volitions belong to one and the same being ; to that being, which he calls himself ; a being which he is led, by the constitution of his nature, to consider as something distinct from his body, and as not liable to be impaired by the loss or mutilation of any of his organs.

“ From these considerations, it appears, that we have the same evidence for the existence of mind, that we have for the existence of body ; nay, if there be any difference between

* Rennell on Scepticism.

the two cases, that we have stronger evidence for it ; inasmuch as the one is suggested to us by the subjects of our own consciousness, and the other merely by the objects of our perceptions."*

Further observations on the immateriality of the human soul will be adduced in their proper place. The reason why the preceding argument on this subject has been here introduced, is not only that the spirituality of the divine nature might be established by proving that intelligence is not a material attribute ; but to keep in view the connexion between the spirituality of God, and that of man, who was made in his image ; and to show the relation which also exists between the doctrine of the materialism of the human soul, and absolute Atheism, and thus to hold out a warning against such speculations. There is no middle course, in fact, though one may be affected. If we materialize man, we must materialize God, or, in other words, deny a First Cause, one of whose essential attributes is intelligence. It is then of little consequence what scheme of Atheism is adopted. On the other hand, if we allow spirituality to God, it follows, as a necessary corollary, that we must allow it to man. These doctrines stand or fall together.

On a subject which arises out of the foregoing discussion, a single observation will be sufficient. It is granted that, on the premises laid down, not only must an immaterial principle be allowed to man, but to all animals possessed of volition ; and few, perhaps none, are found without this property. But though this has often been urged as an objection, it can cost the believer in revelation nothing to admit it. It strengthens, and does not weaken, his argument ; and it is perfectly in accordance with Scripture, which speaks of "the soul of a beast," as well as of "the soul of man." Vastly, nay, we might say, infinitely, different are they in the class and degree of their powers, though of the same spiritual essence ; but they both have properties which cannot be attributed to matter. It does not, however, follow that they are immortal,

because they are immaterial. The truth is, that God only hath independent immortality, because he only is self-existent, and neither human nor brute souls are of necessity immortal. God hath given this privilege to man, not by a necessity of nature, which would be incompatible with dependence, but by his own will, and the continuance of his sustaining power. But he seems to have denied it to the inferior animals, and, according to the language of Scripture, "the spirit of a beast goeth downward." The doctrine of the natural immortality of man will, however, be considered in its proper place.

CHAPTER III.

Attributes of God :—Eternity, Omnipotence, Ubiquity.

FROM the Scriptures we have learned that there is one God, the Creator of all things, and, consequently, living and intelligent. The demonstrations of this truth, which surround us in the works of nature, have been also adverted to. By the same sacred revelations we have been taught, that, as to the divine essence, God is a Spirit ; and, in the further manifestations they have made of him, we learn that, as all things were made by him, he was before all things ; that their being is dependent, his independent ; that he is eminently Being, according to his own peculiar appellation “ I am ; ” self-existent and eternal. In the Scripture doctrine of God we, however, not only find it asserted that God had no beginning, but that he shall have no end. Eternity *ad partem post* is ascribed to him ; for, in the most absolute sense, he hath immortality, and he only hath it by virtue of the inherent perfection of his nature. It is this which completes those sublime and impressive views of the eternity of God with which the revelation he has been pleased to make of himself abounds. “ From everlasting to everlasting thou art God. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of thine hand. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment ; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed ; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.” He inhabiteth eternity, fills and occupies the whole round of boundless duration, and is “ the first and the last.”

In these representations of the eternal existence and absolute immortality of the divine Being, something more than the mere idea of infinite duration is conveyed. No creature

can, without contradiction, be supposed to have been from eternity ; but even a creature may be supposed to continue to exist for ever, in as strict a sense as God himself will continue to exist for ever. Its existence, however, being originally dependent and derived, must continue so. It is not, so to speak, in its nature to live, or it would never have been non-existent ; and what it has not from itself, it has received, and must, through every moment of actual existence, receive, from its Maker. But the very phrase in which the Scriptures speak of the eternity of God, suggests a meaning deeper than that of mere duration : They contrast the stability of the divine Existence with the vanishing and changing nature of all his works, and represent them as reposing upon him for support ; whilst he not only depends not upon any, but rests upon himself. He lives by virtue of his nature, and is essentially unchangeable ; for to the nature of that which exists without cause, life must be essential. In Him who is the Fountain of life there can be no principle of decay ; there can be no desire to cease to be in Him who is perfectly blessed, because of the unbounded excellence of his nature. To Him existence must be the source of infinite enjoyment, both from the contemplation of his own designs, and the manifestation of his glory, purity, and benevolence, to the intelligent creatures he has made to know and to be beatified by such discoveries and benefits. No external power can control, or in any way affect, his felicity, his perfection, or his being. Such are the depths of glory and peculiarity into which the divine eternity, as stated in the Scriptures, leads the wondering mind ; and of which the wisest of Heathens, who ascribed immortality to one God, or to many, had no conception. They were ever fancying something out of God as the cause of their immortal being ;—fate, or external necessity, or some similar and vague notion ;—which obscured, as to them, one of the peculiar glories of the eternal Power and Godhead, who, of and from his own essential nature, is, and was, and shall be.

Some apprehensions of this great truth are seen in the sayings of a few of the Greek sages, though much obscured by

their other notions. Indeed, that appropriate name of God so venerated among the Jews, the *nomen tetragrammaton*, which we render "Jehovah," was known among the Heathens to be the name under which the Jews worshipped the supreme God; and "from this divine name," says Parkhurst, *sub voce*, "the ancient Greeks had their $\text{I}\eta$, $\text{I}\gamma$, in their invocation of the gods."* It expresses not the attributes, but the

* A curious instance of the transmission of this name, and one of the peculiarities of the Hebrew faith, even into China, is mentioned in the following extract of a "Memoir of Lao-tseu, a Chinese Philosopher, who flourished in the Sixth Century before our Æra, and who professed the Opinions ascribed to Plato and to Pythagoras," by M. Abel Remusat: "The metaphysics of Lao-tseu have many other remarkable features, which I have endeavoured to develop in my memoir, and which, for various reasons, I am obliged to pass over in silence. How, in fact, should I give an idea of those lofty abstractions, of those inextricable subtleties, in which the oriental imagination disports and goes astray? It will suffice to say here, that the opinions of the Chinese philosopher on the origin and constitution of the universe, have neither ridiculous fables nor offensive absurdities; that they bear the stamp of a noble and elevated mind; and that, in the sublime reveries which distinguish them, they exhibit a striking and incontestable conformity with the doctrine which was professed a little later by the schools of Pythagoras and Plato. Like the Pythagoreans and the Stoics, our author admits, as the First Cause, reason, an ineffable, uncreated Being that is the type of the universe, and has no type but itself. Like Pythagoras, he takes human souls to be emanations of the ethereal substance; which are re-united with it after death. And, like Plato, he refuses to the wicked the faculty of returning into the bosom of the universal Soul. Like Pythagoras, he gives to the first principles of things the names of numbers; and his cosmogony is, in some degree, algebraical. He attaches the chain of beings to that which he calls 'one,' then to 'two,' then to 'three,' which have made all things. The divine Plato, who had adopted this mysterious dogma, seems to be afraid of revealing it to the profane. He envelopes it in clouds in his famous letter to the three friends; he teaches it to Dionysius of Syracuse; but by enigmas, as he says himself, lest his tablets, falling into the hands of some stranger, they should be read and understood. Perhaps the recollection of the recent death of Socrates imposed this reserve upon him. Lao-tseu does not make use of these indirect ways; and what is most clear in his book is, that a tri-une Being formed the universe. To complete the singularity, he gives to his being a Hebrew name hardly changed, the very name which, in our book, designates 'Him who was, and is, and shall be.' This last circumstance confirms all that the tradition indicated of a journey to the west, and leaves no doubt of the origin of his doctrine. Probably he received it either from the Jews of the ten tribes, whom the conquest of Sulmanazan had just

essence, of God ; which was the reason why the Jews deemed it ineffable. The Septuagint translators preserved the same idea in the word *Κυριος*, by which they translated it ; from *κυρω*, *sum*, “ I am.” This word is said by critics not to be classically used to signify God ; which would mark the peculiarity of this appellation in the Septuagint version more strongly, and convey something of the great idea of the self or absolute existence ascribed to the divine Nature in the Hebrew Scriptures, to those of the heathen philosophers who met with that translation. That it could not be passed over unnoticed, we may gather from St. Hilary, who says, that, before his conversion to Christianity, meeting with this appellation of God in the Pentateuch, he was struck with admiration, nothing being so proper to God as to be. Among the Jews, however, the import of this stupendous name was preserved unimpaired by metaphysical speculations. It was registered in their sacred books ; from the fulness of its meaning the loftiest thoughts are seen to spring up in the minds of the Prophets, that amplify, with an awful and mysterious grandeur, their descriptions of the peculiar glories of God, in contrast with the vain gods of the Heathen, and with every actual existence, however exalted, in heaven and in earth.

On this subject of the eternal duration of the divine Being, many have held a metaphysical refinement. “ The eternal existence of God,” it is said, “ is not to be considered as successive ; the ideas we gain from time are not to be allowed in our conceptions of his duration. As he fills all space with his immensity, he fills all duration with his eternity ; and with him eternity is *nunc stans*, a permanent now, incapable of the relations of past, present, and future.” Such, certainly, is not the view given us of this mysterious subject in the Scriptures ; and if it should be said that they speak popularly, and are accommodated to the infirmity of the thoughts of the body of mankind, we may reply, that philosophy has not, with all its boasting of superior light, carried our views on this att i-

dispersed throughout Asia, or from the apostles of some Phœnician sect ; to which those philosophers also belonged who were the masters and precursors of Pythagoras and Plato.”

bute of the divine Nature at all beyond the revelation ; and, in attempting it, has only obscured the conceptions of its disciples. “ Filling duration with his eternity,” is a phrase without any meaning ; “ for how can any man conceive a permanent instant, which co-exists with a perpetually flowing duration ? One might as well apprehend a mathematical point co-extended with a line, a surface, and all dimensions.”* As this notion has, however, been made the basis of certain opinions upon which some remarks will be subsequently offered, it may be proper briefly to examine it.

Whether we get our idea of time from the motion of bodies without us, or from the consciousness of the succession of our own ideas, or both, is not important to this inquiry. Time, in our conceptions, is divisible ; the artificial divisions are years, months, days, minutes, seconds, &c. We can conceive of yet smaller portions of duration ; and, whether we have given to them artificial names or not, we can conceive no otherwise of duration than continuance of being, estimated, as to degree, by this artificial admeasurement, and therefore as substantially answering to it. It is not denied but that duration is something distinct from these its artificial measures ; yet of this every man’s consciousness will assure him,—that we can form no idea of duration except in this successive manner. But we are told that the eternity of God is a fixed eternal now, from which all ideas of succession, of past and future, are to be excluded ; and we are called upon to conceive of eternal duration without reference to past or future, and to the exclusion of the idea of that flow under which we conceive of time. The proper abstract idea of duration is, however, simple continuance of being, without any reference to the exact degree or extent of it ; because in no other way can it be equally applicable to all the substances of which it is the attribute. It may be finite or infinite, momentary or eternal ; but that depends upon the substance of which it is the quality, and not upon its own nature. Our own observation and experience teach us how to apply it to ourselves,

* Abernethy’s Sermons.

As to us, duration is dependent and finite ; as to God, it is infinite ; but in both cases the originality or dependence, the finiteness or infinity of it, arises, not out of the nature of duration itself, but out of other qualities of the subjects respectively.

Duration, then, as applied to God, is no more than an extension of the idea as applied to ourselves ; and to exhort us to conceive of it as something essentially different, is to require us to conceive what is inconceivable. It is to demand of us to think without ideas. Duration is continuance of existence ; continuance of existence is capable of being longer or shorter ; and hence necessarily arises the idea of the succession of the minutest points of duration into which we can conceive it divided. Beyond this the mind cannot go ; it forms the idea of duration no other way : And if what we call duration be any thing different from this in God, it is not duration, properly so called, according to human ideas ; it is something else, for which there is no name among men, because there is no idea, and therefore it is impossible to reason about it. As long as metaphysicians use the term, they must take the idea : If they spurn the idea, they have no right to the term, and ought at once to confess that they can go no further. Dr. Cudworth defines infinity of duration to be nothing else but perfection, as including in it necessary existence and immutability. This, it is true, is as much a definition of the moon, as of infinity of duration ; but it is valuable, as it shows that, in the view of this great man, though an advocate of the *nunc stans*, “the standing now” of eternity, we must abandon the term “duration,” if we give up the only idea under which it can be conceived.

It follows from this, therefore, that either we must apply the term “duration” to the divine Being in the same sense in which we apply it to creatures, with the extension of the idea to a duration which has no bounds and limits ; or blot it out of our creeds, as a word to which our minds, with all the aid they may derive from the labours of metaphysicians, can attach no meaning. The only notion which has the appearance of an objection to this successive duration as applied to him,

appears wholly to arise from confounding two very distinct things ; succession in the duration, and change in the substance. Dr. Cudworth appears to have fallen into this error. He speaks of the duration of an imperfect nature, as sliding from the present to the future, expecting something of itself which is not yet in being ; and of a perfect nature being essentially immutable, having a permanent and unchanging duration, never losing any thing of itself once present, nor yet running forward to meet something of itself which is not yet in being. Now, though this is a good description of a perfect and immutable nature, it is no description at all of an eternally-enduring nature. Duration implies no loss in the substance of any being, nor addition to it. A perfect nature never loses any thing of itself, nor expects more of itself than is possessed ; but this does not arise from the attribute of its duration, however that attribute may be conceived of, but from its perfection and consequent immutability. These attributes do not flow from the duration, but the extent of the duration from them. The argument is clearly good for nothing, unless it could be proved that successive duration necessarily implies change in the nature ; but that is contradicted by the experience of finite beings ; their natures are not at all determined by their duration, but their duration by their natures ; and they exist for a moment, or for ages, according to the nature which their Maker has impressed upon them. If it be said that, at least, successive duration imports that a being loses past duration, and expects the arrival of future existence, we reply, that this is no imperfection at all. Even finite creatures do not feel it to be an imperfection to have existed, and to look for continued and interminable being. It is true, with the past we lose knowledge and pleasure ; and expecting in all future periods increase of knowledge and happiness, we are reminded by that of our present imperfection ; but this imperfection does not arise from our successive and flowing duration, and we never refer it to that. It is not the past which takes away our knowledge and pleasure ; nor future duration, simply considered, which will confer the increase of both. Our imperfections arise out of the essential nature of

our being, not out of the manner in which our being is continued. It is not the flow of our duration, but the flow of our natures, which produces these effects. On the contrary, we think that the idea of our successive duration, that is, of continuance, is an excellency, and not a defect. Let all ideas of continuance be banished from the mind ; let these be to us a *nunc semper stans*, during the whole of our being, and we appear to gain nothing ; our pleasures, surely, are not diminished by the idea of long continuance being added to present enjoyment : That they have been, and still remain, and will continue, on the contrary, greatly heightens them. Without the idea of a flowing duration, we could have no such measure of the continuance of our pleasures ; and this we should consider an abatement of our happiness. What is so obvious an excellency in the spirit of man, and in angelic natures, can never be thought an imperfection in God, when joined with a nature essentially perfect and immutable.

But it may be said, that “ eternal duration, considered as successive, is only an artificial manner of measuring and conceiving of duration ; and is no more eternal duration itself than minutes and moments, the artificial measures of time, are time itself.” Were this granted, the question would still be, whether there is any thing in duration, considered generally, or in time, considered specially, which corresponds to these artificial methods of measuring and conceiving of them. The ocean is measured by leagues ; but the extension of the ocean, and the measure of it, are distinct. They, nevertheless, answer to each other. Leagues are the nominal divisions of an extended surface ; but there is a real extension, which answers to the artificial conception and admeasurement of it. In like manner, days, and hours, and moments, are the measures of time ; but there is either something in time which answers to these measures, or not only the measure, but the thing itself, is artificial,—an imaginary creation. If any man will contend, that the period of duration which we call “ time ” is nothing, no farther dispute can be held with him ; and he may be left to deny also the existence of matter, and to enjoy his philosophic revel in an ideal world. We apply the same argument to

duration generally, whether finite or infinite. Minutes and moments, or smaller portions, for which we have no name, may be artificial, adopted to aid our conceptions ; but conceptions of what ? Not of any thing standing still, but of something going on. Of duration we have no other conception ; and if there be nothing in nature which answers to this conception, then is duration itself imaginary, and we discourse about nothing. If the duration of the divine Being admits not of past, present, and future, one of these two consequences must follow,—that no such attribute as that of eternity belongs to him, or that there is no power in the human mind to conceive of it. In either case, the Scriptures are greatly impugned ; for “He who was, and is, and is to come,” is a revelation of the eternity of God, which is then in no sense true. It is not true, if used literally : And it is as little so, if the language be figurative ; for the figure rests on no basis ; it illustrates nothing ; it misleads.

God is omnipotent : Of this attribute, also, we have the most ample revelation, and in the most impressive and sublime language. From the annunciation in the Scriptures of a divine existence who was in the beginning before all things, the very first step is the display of his almighty power in the creation out of nothing, and the immediate arrangement, in order and perfection, of the “heaven and the earth ;” by which is meant, not this globe only, with its atmosphere, or even with its own celestial system, but the universe itself ; for “he made the stars also.” We are thus placed at once in the presence of an agent of unbounded power, “the strict and correct conclusion being, that a power which could create such a world as this, must be, beyond all comparison, greater than any which we experience in ourselves, than any which we observe in other visible agents ; greater, also, than any which we can want for our individual protection and preservation, in the Being upon whom we depend ; a power, likewise, to which we are not authorized by our observation or knowledge to assign any limits of space or duration.” *

That the sacred writers should so frequently dwell upon the omnipotence of God, has an important reason that arises out of the very design of the revelation which they were the instruments of communicating to mankind. Men were to be reminded of their obligations to obedience ; and God is therefore constantly exhibited as the Creator, the Preserver, and Lord of all things. His reverent worship and fear were to be enjoined upon them ; and, by the manifestation of his works, the veil was withdrawn from his glory and majesty. Idolatry was to be checked and reproved, and the true God was thus placed in contrast with the limited and powerless gods of the Heathen. “ Among the gods of the nations, is there no god like unto thee ; neither are there any works like thy works.” Finally : He was to be exhibited as the object of trust to creatures, constantly reminded by experience of their own infirmity and dependence ; and to whom it was essential to know, that his power was absolute, unlimited, and irresistible.

In the revelation which was thus designed to awe and control the bad, and to afford strength of mind and consolation to the good under all circumstances, the omnipotence of God is therefore placed in a great variety of impressive views, and connected with the most striking illustrations.

It is presented by the fact of creation, the creation of beings out of nothing ; which itself, though it had been confined to a single object, however minute, exceeds finite comprehension, and overwhelms the faculties. This with God required no effort : “ He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast.” The vastness and variety of his works enlarge the conception : “ The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handy work.” “ He spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea ; he maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south ; he doeth great things, past finding out, yea, and wonders without number. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. He bindeth up the waters in the thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them ; he hath compassed the

waters with bounds until the day and night come to an end." The ease with which he sustains, orders, and controls, the most powerful and unruly of the elements, presents his omnipotence under an aspect of ineffable dignity and majesty: "By him all things consist." He brake up for the sea "a decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." "He looketh to the end of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven, to make the weight for the winds, to weigh the waters by measure, to make a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder." "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, meted out heaven with a span, comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the winds in a balance?" The descriptions of the divine power are often terrible: "The pillars of heaven tremble, and are astonished at his reproof; he divideth the sea by his power." "He removeth the mountains, and they know it not; he overturneth them in his anger; he shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble; he commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars." The same absolute subjection of creatures to his dominion is seen among the intelligent inhabitants of the material universe; and angels, men the most exalted, and evil spirits, are swayed with as much ease as the least-resistless elements: "He maketh his angels spirits, and his Ministers a flame of fire." They veil their faces before his throne, and acknowledge themselves his servants. "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers," "as the dust of the balance, less than nothing, and vanity." "He bringeth Princes to nothing." "He setteth up one, and putteth down another;" "for the kingdom is the Lord's, and he is Governor among the nations." "The angels that sinned, he cast down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment." The closing scenes of this world complete these transcendent conceptions of the majesty and power of God. The dead of all ages shall rise from their graves at his voice; and the sea shall give up the dead which

are in it. Before his face heaven and earth flee away, the stars fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven are shaken. The dead, small and great, stand before God, and are divided as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats ; the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.

Of these amazing views of the omnipotence of God, spread almost through every page of the Scripture, the power lies in their truth. They are not eastern exaggerations, mistaken for sublimity. Every thing in nature answers to them, and renews from age to age the energy of the impression which they cannot but make upon the reflecting mind. The order of the astral revolutions indicates the constant presence of an invisible but incomprehensible Power. The seas hurl the weight of their billows upon the rising shores, but every where find a "bound fixed by a perpetual decree." The tides reach their height ; if they flowed on for a few hours, the earth would change places with the bed of the sea ; but, under an invisible control, they become reflux. "He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke," is not mere imagery. Every volcano is a testimony of that truth to nature which we find in the Scriptures ; and earthquakes teach, that before him "the pillars of the world tremble." Men collected into armies, and populous nations, give us vast ideas of human power ; but let an army be placed amidst the sand-storms and burning winds of the desert, as in the east has frequently happened ; or before "his frost," as in our own day in Russia, where one of the mightiest armaments was seen retreating before, or perishing under, an unexpected visitation of snow and storm ; or let the utterly helpless state of a populous country which has been visited by famine, or by a resistless pestilential disease, be reflected upon ; and it is no figure of speech to say, that "all nations are before him less than nothing and vanity."

Nor, in reviewing this doctrine of Scripture, ought the fine practical uses made of the omnipotence of God, by the sacred writers, to be overlooked. In them there is nothing said for the display of knowledge, as, too often, in heathen writers ; no

speculation without a moral subservient to it, and that by evident design. To excite and keep alive in man the fear and worship of God, and to bring him to a felicitous confidence in that almighty Power which pervades and controls all things, we have observed, are the reasons for those ample displays of the omnipotence of God, which roll through the sacred volume with a sublimity that inspiration only could supply. "Declare his glory among the Heathen, his marvellous works among all nations; for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised." "Glory and honour are in his presence, and strength and gladness in his place." "Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength; give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name." "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "If God be for us, who then can be against us?" "Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." "What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee." Thus, as one observes, "our natural fears, of which we must have many, remit us to God, and remind us, since we know what God is, to lay hold on his almighty power."

Ample, however, as are the views afforded us in Scripture of the power of God, we are not to consider the subject as bounded by them. As when the Scriptures declare the eternity of God, they declare it so as to unveil to us something of that fearful peculiarity of the divine nature, that he is the fountain of being to himself, and that he is eternal, because he is the "I am;" so we are taught not to measure his omnipotence by the actual displays of it which have been made. They are the manifestations of the principle, but not the measure of its capacity; and should we resort to the discoveries of modern philosophy, which, by the help of instruments, has so greatly enlarged the known boundaries of the visible universe, and add to the stars, visible to the naked eye, new exhibitions of the divine power in those nebulous appearances of the heavens which are resolvable into myriads of distinct celestial luminaries, whose immense distances com-

mingle their light before it reaches our eyes ; we thus almost infinitely expand the circle of created existence, and enter upon a formerly unknown and overwhelming range of divine operation ; but we are still reminded, that his power is truly almighty and measureless : “ Lo, all these are parts of his ways ; but how little a portion is known of him, and the thunder of his power who can understand ? ” It is a mighty conception to think of a Power from which all other power is derived, and to which it is subordinate ; which nothing can oppose ; which can beat down and annihilate all other powers whatever ; a power which operates in the most perfect manner, at once, in an instant, with the utmost ease : But the Scriptures lead us to the contemplation of greater depths, and those unfathomable. The omnipotence of God is inconceivable and boundless. It arises from the infinite perfection of God, that his power can never be actually exhausted ; and, in every imaginable instant in eternity, that inexhaustible power of God can, if it please him, be adding either more creatures to those in existence, or greater perfection to them ; since “ it belongs to self-existent being, to be always full and communicative, and, to the communicated contingent being, to be ever empty and craving.” *

One limitation only we can conceive, which, however, detracts nothing from this perfection of the divine nature :—

“ Where things in themselves imply a contradiction, as that a body may be extended and not extended, in a place and not in a place, at the same time ; such things, I say, cannot be done by God, because contradictions are impossible in their own nature : Nor is it any derogation from the divine power to say, they cannot be done ; for as the object of the understanding, of the eye, and the ear, is that which is intelligible, visible, and audible ; so the object of power must be that which is possible ; and as it is no prejudice to the most perfect understanding, or sight, or hearing, that it does not understand what is not intelligible, or see what is not visible, or hear what is not audible ; so neither is it any diminution to

the most perfect power, that it does not do what is not possible."* "In like manner, God cannot do any thing that is repugnant to his other perfections : He cannot lie, nor deceive, nor deny himself ; for this would be injurious to his truth. He cannot love sin, nor punish innocence ; for this would destroy his holiness and goodness : And, therefore, to ascribe a power to him that is inconsistent with the rectitude of his nature, is not to magnify but debase him ; for all unrighteousness is weakness, a defection from right reason, a deviation from the perfect rule of action, and arises from a defect of goodness and power. In a word, since all the attributes of God are essentially the same, a power in him which tends to destroy any other attribute of the divine nature, must be a power destructive of itself. Well, therefore, may we conclude him absolutely omnipotent, who, by being able to effect all things consistent with his perfections, sheweth infinite ability, and, by not being able to do any thing repugnant to the same perfections, demonstrates himself subject to no infirmity."†

Nothing, certainly, in the finest writings of antiquity, were all their best thoughts collected as to the majesty and power of God, can bear any comparison to the views thus presented to us by divine revelation. Were we to forget for a moment, what is the fact, that their noblest notions stand connected with fancies and vain speculations which deprive them of their force, their thought never rises so high, the current of it is broken, the round of lofty conception is not completed ; and, unconnected as their views of divine power were with the eternal destiny of man, and the very reason of creation, we never hear in them, as in the Scriptures, the thunder of his power. One of the best specimens of heathen devotion is given below, in the hymn of Cleanthes the Stoic ; and, though noble and just, it sinks infinitely in the comparison :—

"Hail, O Jupiter, most glorious of the immortals, invoked under many names, always most powerful, the first ruler of nature, whose law governs all things ; hail ! for to address

* Bishop Wilkins.

† Pearson on the Creed.

thee is permitted to all mortals. For our race we have from thee ; we mortals who creep upon the ground, receiving only the echo of thy voice. I, therefore, I will celebrate thee, and will always sing thy power. All this universe rolling round the earth obeys thee wherever thou guidest, and willingly is governed by thee. So vehement, so fiery, so immortal is the thunder which thou holdest subservient in thy unshaken hands ; for by the stroke of this all nature was rooted ; by this thou directest the common reason which pervades all things, mixed with the greater and lesser luminaries ; so great a King art thou, supreme through all ; nor does any work take place without thee on the earth, nor in the ethereal sky, nor in the sea, except what the bad perform in their own folly. But do thou, O Jupiter, giver of all blessings, dwelling in the clouds, ruler of the thunder, defend mortals from dismal misfortune ; which dispel, O Father, from the soul, and grant it to attain that judgment trusting to which thou governest all things with justice ; that, being honoured, we may repay thee with honour, singing continually thy works, as becomes a mortal ; since there is no greater meed, to men or gods, than always to celebrate justly the universal law."

The omnipresence, or ubiquity, of God is another doctrine of Scripture ; and it is corroborated by facts obvious to all reflecting beings, though to us, and perhaps to all finite minds, the mode is incomprehensible. The statement of this doctrine in the inspired records, like that of all the other attributes of God, is made in their own peculiar tone and emphasis of majesty and sublimity : " Whither shall I go from thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up to heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there ; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." " Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him ? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord ? Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off ?" " Thus saith the Lord, Behold, heaven is my throne, and the

earth is my footstool." "Behold, heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee." "Though he dig into hell, thence shall my hand take him; though he climb up into heaven, thence will I bring him down; and though he hide himself in the top of Carmel, I will search and take him out from thence." "In him we live, and move, and have our being." "He filleth all things."

Some striking passages on the ubiquity of the divine presence may be found in the writings of some of the Greek philosophers, arising out of this notion,—that God was the soul of the world; but their very connexion with this speculation, notwithstanding the imposing phrase occasionally adopted, strikingly marks the difference between their most exalted views and those of the Hebrew Prophets, on this subject. "To a large proportion of those who hold a distinguished rank among the ancient theistical philosophers, the idea of the personality of the Deity was, in a great measure, unknown. The Deity, by them, was considered, not so much an intelligent Being, as an animating power, diffused throughout the world; and was introduced into their speculative system to account for the motion of that passive mass of matter which was supposed co-eval and, indeed, co-existent with himself."* These defective notions are confessed by Gibbon, a writer not disposed to undervalue their attainments:—

"The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man, rather than from that of God. They meditated, however, on the divine Nature, as a very curious and important speculation; and, in the profound inquiry, they displayed the strength and weakness of the human understanding. Of the four most considerable sects, the Stoics and the Platonicians endeavoured to reconcile the jarring interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime proofs of the existence and perfections of the First Cause; but as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman, in the Stoic philosophy, was not sufficiently distinguished from the work; whilst, on the contrary, the spi-

* Sumner's Records of the Creation.

ritual God of Plato and his disciples resembled more an idea than a substance." *

Similar errors have been revived in the infidel philosophy of modern times, from Spinoza down to the later offspring of the German and French schools. The same remark applies also to the oriental philosophy, which, as before remarked, presents, at this day, a perfect view of the boasted wisdom of ancient Greece, which was brought to nought by "the foolishness" of apostolic preaching. But in the Scriptures there is nothing confused in the doctrine of the divine ubiquity. God is everywhere, but he is not every thing. All things have their being in him, but he is distinct from all things; he fills the universe, but is not mingled with it. He is the Intelligence which guides, and the Power which sustains; but his personality is preserved, and he is independent of the works of his hands, however vast and noble. So far is his presence from being bounded by the universe itself, that, as we are taught in the passage above quoted from the Psalms, were it possible for us to wing our way into the immeasurable depths and breadths of space, God would there surround us, in as absolute a sense as that in which he is said to be about our bed and our path, in that part of the world where his will has placed us.

On this, as on all similar subjects, the Scriptures use terms which are taken in their common-sense acceptation among mankind; and though the vanity of the human mind disposes many to seek a philosophy, in the doctrine thus announced, deeper than that which its popular terms convey, we are bound to conclude, if we would pay but a common respect to an admitted revelation, that, where no manifest figure of speech occurs, the truth of the doctrine lies in the tenor of the terms by which it is expressed; otherwise there would be no revelation, I do not say of the *modus*, (for that is confessedly incomprehensible,) but of the fact. In the case before us the terms "presence," and "place," are used according to common notions; and must be so taken if the Scriptures

are intelligible. Metaphysical refinements are not scriptural doctrines when they give to the terms chosen by the Holy Spirit an acceptation out of their general and proper use, and make them the signs of a perfectly distinct class of ideas ; if, indeed, all distinctness of idea is not lost in the attempt. It is, therefore, in the popular and just, because scriptural, manner, that we are to conceive of the omnipresence of God.

“ If we reflect upon ourselves, we may observe that we fill but a small space, and that our knowledge or power reaches but a little way. We can act at one time in one place only, and the sphere of our influence is narrow at largest. Would we be witnesses to what is done at any distance from us, or exert there our active powers, we must remove ourselves thither. For this reason we are necessarily ignorant of a thousand things which pass around us ; incapable of attending and managing any great variety of affairs, or performing, at the same time, any number of actions, for our own good, or for the benefit of others.

“ Although we feel this to be the present condition of our being, and the limited state of our intelligent and active powers, yet we can easily conceive there may exist beings more perfect, and whose presence may extend far and wide ; any one of whom present in what to us are various places, at the same time, may know at once what is done in all these, and act in all of them ; and thus be able to regard and direct a variety of affairs at the same instant ; and who, further, being qualified by the purity and activity of their nature to pass from one place to another with great ease and swiftness, may thus fill a large sphere of action, direct a great variety of affairs, confer a great number of benefits, and observe a multitude of actions, at the same time, or in so swift a succession as to us would appear but one instant. Thus perfect we may easily believe the angels of God.

“ We can further conceive this extent of presence and of ability for knowledge and action to admit of degrees of ascending perfection, approaching to infinite. And when we have thus raised our thoughts to the idea of a being who is not only present throughout a large empire, but throughout our

world ; and not only in every part of our world, but in every part of all the numberless suns and worlds which roll in the starry heavens ; who is not only able to enliven and actuate the plants, animals, and men who live upon this globe, but countless varieties of creatures everywhere in an immense universe ; yea, whose presence is not confined to the universe, immeasurable as that is by any finite mind, but who is present everywhere in infinite space ; and who is, therefore, able to create still new worlds, and fill them with proper inhabitants, attend, supply, and govern them all ; when we have thus gradually raised and enlarged our conceptions, we have the best idea we can form of the universal presence of the great Jehovah who filleth heaven and earth. There is no part of the universe, no portion of space, uninhabited by God, none wherein this Being of perfect power, wisdom, and benevolence is not essentially present. Could we with the swiftness of a sunbeam dart ourselves beyond the limits of the creation, and for ages continue our progress in infinite space, we should still be surrounded with the divine presence, nor ever be able to reach that space where God is not.

“ His presence also penetrates every part of our world ; the most solid parts of the earth cannot exclude it ; for it pierces as easily the centre of the globe, as the empty air. All creatures live, and move, and have their being in him. And the inmost recesses of the human heart can no more exclude his presence, or conceal a thought from his knowledge, than the deepest caverns of the earth.”*

The illustrations and confirmatory proofs of this doctrine which the material world furnishes, are numerous and striking :—

“ It is a most evident and acknowledged truth, that a being cannot act where it is not ; if, therefore, actions and effects, which manifest the highest wisdom, power, and goodness in the author of them, are continually produced everywhere, the author of these actions, or God, must be continually present with us, and wherever he thus acts. The matter which com-

poses the world is evidently lifeless and thoughtless ; it must, therefore, be incapable of moving itself, or designing or producing any effects which require wisdom or power. The matter of our world, or the small parts which constitute the air, the earth, and the waters, is yet continually moved, so as to produce effects of this kind ; such are the innumerable herbs, and trees, and fruits which adorn the earth, and support the countless millions of creatures who inhabit it. There must therefore be constantly present, all over the earth, a most wise, mighty, and good Being, the author and director of these motions.

“ We cannot, it is true, see him with our bodily eyes, because he is a pure spirit ; yet this is not any proof that he is not present. A judicious discourse, a series of kind actions, convince us of the presence of a friend, a person of prudence and benevolence. We cannot see the present mind, the seat and principle of these qualities ; yet the constant regular motion of the tongue, the hand, and the whole body, (which are the instruments of our souls, as the material universe and all the various bodies in it are the instruments of the Deity,) will not suffer us to doubt, that there is an intelligent and benevolent principle within the body, which produces all these skilful motions and kind actions. The sun, the air, the earth, and the waters, are no more able to move themselves, and produce all that beautiful and useful variety of plants, and fruits, and trees with which our earth is covered, than the body of a man, when the soul hath left it, is able to move itself, form an instrument, plough a field, or build a house. If the laying out judiciously and well cultivating a small estate, sowing it with proper grain at the best time of the year, watering it in due season and quantities, and gathering in the fruits when ripe, and laying them up in the best manner,—if all these effects prove the estate to have a manager, and the manager possessed of skill and strength,—certainly the enlightening and warming the whole earth by the sun, and so directing its motion, and the motion of the earth, as to produce in a constant useful succession day and night, summer and winter, seed-time and harvest ; the watering the earth con-

tinually by the clouds, and thus bringing forth immense quantities of herbage, grain, and fruits,—certainly all these effects continually produced must prove, that a Being of the greatest power, wisdom, and benevolence, is continually present throughout our world, which he thus supports, moves, actuates, and makes fruitful.

“The fire which warms us knows nothing of its serviceableness to this purpose, nor of the wise laws according to which its particles are moved to produce this effect. And that it is placed in such a part of the house, where it may be greatly beneficial and no way hurtful, is ascribed without hesitation to the contrivance and labour of a person who knew its proper place and uses. And if we came daily into a house wherein we saw this was regularly done, though we never saw an inhabitant therein, we could not doubt that the house was occupied by a rational inhabitant. That huge globe of fire in the heavens which we call the sun, and on the light and influences of which the fertility of our world, and the life and pleasure of all animals, depend, knows nothing of its serviceableness to these purposes, nor of the wise laws according to which its beams are dispensed ; nor what place or motions were requisite for these beneficial purposes. Yet its beams are darted constantly in infinite numbers, every one according to those well-chosen laws, and its proper place and motion are maintained. Must not, then, its place be appointed, its motion regulated, and beams darted, by almighty wisdom and goodness ; which prevent the sun’s ever wandering in the boundless spaces of the heavens, so as to leave us in disconsolate cold and darkness ; or coming so near, or emitting his rays in such a manner, as to burn us up ? Must not the great Being who enlightens and warms us by the sun, his instrument, who raises and sends down the vapours, brings forth and ripens the grain and fruits, and who is thus ever acting around us for our benefit, be always present in the sun, throughout the air, and all over the earth, which he thus moves and actuates ?

“This earth is in itself a dead, motionless mass, and void of all counsel ; yet proper parts of it are continually raised through the small pipes which compose the bodies of plants

and trees, and are made to contribute to their growth, to open and shine in blossoms and leaves, and to swell and harden into fruit. Could blind, thoughtless particles thus continually keep on their way, through numberless windings, without once blundering, if they were not guided by an unerring hand? Can the most perfect human skill from earth and water form one grain, much more a variety of beautiful and relishing fruits? Must not the directing Mind who does all this constantly, be most wise, mighty, and benevolent? Must not the Being who thus continually exerts his skill and energy around us, for our benefit, be confessed to be always present, and concerned for our welfare?

“Can these effects be ascribed to any thing below an all-wise and almighty cause? And must not this cause be present wherever he acts? Were God to speak to us every month from heaven, and, with a voice loud as thunder, declare that he observes, provides for, and governs us; this would not be a proof, in the judgment of sound reason, by many degrees so valid. Since much less wisdom and power are required to form such sounds in the air, than to produce these effects; and to give, not merely verbal declarations, but substantial evidences, of his presence and care over us.” *

“In every part and place of the universe, with which we are acquainted, we perceive the exertion of a power, which we believe, mediately or immediately, to proceed from the Deity. For instance: In what part or point, of space, that has ever been explored, do we not discover attraction? In what regions do we not find light? In what accessible portion of our globe do we not meet with gravity, magnetism, electricity; together with the properties, also, and powers of organized substances, of vegetable or of animated nature? Nay, further, we may ask, What kingdom is there of nature, what corner of space, in which there is any thing that can be examined by us, where we do not fall upon contrivance and design? The only reflection, perhaps, which arises in our minds from this view of the

world around us is, that the laws of nature every where prevail ; that they are uniform and universal. But what do we mean by ‘ the laws of nature,’ or by any law ? Effects are produced by power, not by laws. A law cannot execute itself. A law refers us to an agent.” *

The usual argument *à priori*, on this attribute of the divine nature, has been stated as follows ; but amidst such a mass of demonstration of a much higher kind, it cannot be of any great value :—

“ The First Cause, the supreme, all-perfect Mind, as he could not derive his being from any other cause, must be independent of all other, and therefore unlimited. He exists by an absolute necessity of nature ; and as all the parts of infinite space are exactly uniform and alike, for the same reason that he exists in any one part, he must exist in all. No reason can be assigned for excluding him from one part, which would not exclude him from all. But that he is present in some parts of space, the evident effects of his wisdom, power, and benevolence continually produced, demonstrate, beyond all rational doubt. He must therefore be alike present every where ; and fill infinite space with his infinite being.” †

Among metaphysicians, it has been matter of dispute, whether God is present every where by an infinite extension of his essence. This is the opinion of Newton, Dr. S. Clarke, and their followers : Others have objected to this notion, that it might then be said, God is neither in heaven nor in earth, but only a part of God in each. The former opinion, however, appears most in harmony with the Scriptures ; though the term “ extension,” through the inadequacy of language, conveys too material an idea. The objection just stated is wholly grounded on notions taken from material objects, and is therefore of little weight, because it is not applicable to an immaterial substance. It is best to confess with one who had thought deeply on the subject, “ There is an incomprehensibleness in the manner of every thing about which no controversy can or

* Paley.

† Amory.

ought to be concerned.”* That we cannot comprehend how God is fully, and completely, and undividedly present every where, need not surprise us, when we reflect that the manner in which our own minds are present with our bodies is as incomprehensible as the manner in which the Supreme mind is present with every thing in the universe.

* Jackson's Existence and Unity, &c. Vide also Watts's Philosophical Essays, and Law's Inquiry into the Ideas of Space, &c.

THE END.

